

Yokefellows

Paul and His Companions

by John D. LaVier

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(817) 451-0937

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To Ferne ...

*... My beloved companion
for the past 58 years.*

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FOREWORD

That the Apostle Paul was truly a great man of God none can deny. He could say: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." With heart aflame with love for Christ, and a burden for the souls of men, he traveled the whole known world proclaiming the message of God's grace. He was a tireless worker but in all his labors, hardship and suffering he enjoyed the companionship of many friends and helpers.

It has been said that one can tell a man by the company he keeps. There may be some truth to this, for one can often see the mannerisms and character of a person reflected in their friends. The Psalmist could say: "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of those that keep thy precepts" (Psalm 119:63). The Apostle Paul was also a companion of all those who feared the Lord and delighted in His Word. He was certainly a social person who prized highly his friends and fellow-helpers in the work of the ministry. In practically every letter he makes reference to his comrades and co-laborers and lauds them greatly. In the 16th chapter of Romans he mentions thirty-six of them by name. His companions were a tower of strength and encouragement to him.

It is hardly possible to mention all whose names are inscribed on the sacred page, but we have singled out a few who had a close working relationship with the apostle. We will endeavor to look at these, not simply from a historical and biographical perspective, but also from a practical point of view. The fine qualities that endeared them to Paul and made them great in the eyes of the Lord should challenge and inspire us.

Barnabas

“A good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith”

We begin this look at Paul’s companions with Barnabas, and this choice is obvious, for he was one of the first to be identified with Paul after his conversion. However, there were two others, prior to Barnabas, who showed kindness to Paul and ministered to him. They were Judas and Ananias. These names remind us of the betrayer of Christ and of the one who lied to the Holy Ghost, but these two were not like their infamous namesakes. After his experience on the Damascus road Saul (we will henceforth use the name Paul) spent three days in the house of Judas, and under such shock that he could neither eat nor drink. In addition to the emotional experience was the realization that all his righteousness, the result of law keeping and religious zeal was nothing but refuse to be cast on the scrap pile. How this must have crushed him. It was then that Ananias, sent of the Lord, came to recover him of his sight and to inform him of his commission to bear the Lord’s name before the Gentiles, as well as to kings and the children of Israel. But think of these dear saints, Judas and Ananias, whose names were perhaps on the warrants held by Saul to bring about their arrest and imprisonment. He was their enemy and yet they showed the love of Christ as they ministered to his need.

Having his eyes opened, spiritually as well as physically, Paul wasted no time. There in Damascus, where he had come to seek out the disciples, he began straightway to preach Christ in

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the synagogue. He no doubt told them that he had seen Jesus of Nazareth, and that He was alive from the dead and was indeed the Christ, the Son of God. This ministry was very brief, for he writes in Galatians 1:16-17, "Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood ... but I went into Arabia." He was there, not for three years as commonly thought, but for a much shorter period of time. He was there for a conference, not with man, but with the Lord Himself. It was there he received the message he was to bear to the Gentiles. Paul wrote concerning the gospel he preached: "For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:12). He also referred to this when he wrote of "the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24).

Passingly, it should be noted that Paul did not receive the entire body of truth for this dispensation at the meeting in Arabia. He wrote of the "abundance of the revelations" that were later given to him. He was also caught up into the third heaven where he heard unspeakable words, which it was not lawful (at that time) for him to utter. During the transition, as Israel is fading out of the picture, the light begins to shine clearer and brighter. With the solemn pronouncement of Acts 28:28 the transition ends and Israel is entirely off the scene. In the letters thereafter written, the prison epistles, we have the capstone of all truth. In them is revealed the heavenly calling and glorious destiny of the Church, the Body of Christ. In them the last vestiges of the old order are gone and in them is revealed the normal program for God's people in this dispensation of His grace. Not the beginning of a new Body, but most certainly a new program for the Body.

After the time in Arabia Paul returned to Damascus where "he increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this (Jesus) is very Christ." This strong preaching so aroused and infuriated the Jews that they determined to kill him. They set guards at all the

gates to prevent his escape from the city, but the believers let him down by the wall in a basket. What a humiliating experience. The proud, arrogant Pharisee who had come to the city breathing out threatenings and slaughter now leaves it huddled in a basket in the dark of night. In the eleventh chapter of II Corinthians, where he gives a record of his sufferings, he concludes with a reference to this, as though it was the most degrading experience of all. Following this escape he went back to Jerusalem.

Arriving in Jerusalem Paul desired to join with the other believers. However, they were suspicious of him, not believing that he was a true disciple, but only seeking to infiltrate their ranks to bring about further persecution. It is here that Barnabas enters the picture, for we read: "But Barnabas took him" (Acts 9:27). Yes, Barnabas took him to the apostles and the others and told them how Paul had seen the Lord, had been truly converted, and had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

Barnabas was a man who was interested in others and always looking for the opportunity to befriend them in their time of need. He is first mentioned in the 4th chapter of Acts. In the kingdom church at Jerusalem there was a Christian commune, a prototype of the future, and those who had property sold it, brought the proceeds to the apostles, and distribution was made to those in need. Then we read, "And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation), a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet" (Acts 4:36-37). Why Barnabas' gift is singled out we do not know. It may be it was rather large, or it may be because of the spirit in which it was given. It was because of this character, always seeking to meet the needs of others, that he was given a new name: "The son of consolation." What a beautiful name. It indicates his generous spirit, his heart of love and concern, his hand always reaching out to help. He was truly Mr. Greatheart.

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And now Barnabas' generous spirit goes out to Paul. He sees Paul desiring and needing fellowship, and being denied, and he does something about it. He takes Paul in hand, speaks up on his behalf, and such was the trust and confidence all had in Barnabas that they listened to him and Paul was accepted. Almost immediately Paul begins to boldly preach Christ, which again stirred up the enemies of the truth and they went about to slay him. When their murderous plans were known, the brethren, perhaps led by friend Barnabas, escorted Paul to Caesarea on the seacoast where he sailed for Tarsus, his birthplace. He no doubt went the more willingly because the Lord had appeared to him in the temple telling him to get out of Jerusalem, and reminding him that his mission was to the Gentiles (Acts 22:17-21).

Paul's stay in Tarsus is nearly a blank to us, and it probably lasted six or seven years. It is certain he was not idle, for he was not that sort of person. It was perhaps during this time that he won his kinsmen to Christ, those mentioned in Romans 16, including the sister whose son later saved his life. He may also have founded the churches in Cilicia referred to in Acts 15:41.

Meanwhile, some of those scattered abroad by the persecution following Stephen's death had gotten as far as Antioch. There they preached the word and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord. News of this reached Jerusalem and they sent Barnabas to investigate. The Scripture says: "For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith" (Acts 11:24). When Barnabas arrived at Antioch and saw the grace of God in action, with souls being saved and the Word working in the hearts of these Greeks, he was glad. This shows how big-hearted he was. Some are so small-hearted that when they hear of the Lord blessing others, instead of being glad they are mad. Not so with friend Barnabas, he was glad. Here we see the son of consolation becoming the son of exhortation. Having taken their stand for Christ he exhorted them not to falter. He perhaps told them how others were suffering at Jerusalem, and they

could expect to suffer, but they were not to waver, but with purpose of heart they were to cleave unto the Lord. We need this exhortation also, for if we are going to be a companion of Paul we can expect to suffer too. There have been those who have taken a stand for the Lord and for Pauline truth; they have started off well and then when a bit of opposition comes, or they see what it may cost, they wilt, throw in the towel and fade off the scene. We need to “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.” He will give fortitude and courage, that with purpose of heart we will cleave unto Him.

When Barnabas saw the importance of the work at Antioch, and many Greeks believing and desiring to hear the Word, he thought of Paul and of Paul’s commission to go to the Gentiles. Here again we see the noble character of Barnabas. He did not think of himself. If he had been like some today he would have erected a Barnabas Tabernacle and built the work around himself, but unselfish soul that he was, off he goes to fetch Paul from Tarsus, bringing him to Antioch, where for a year they were laborers together teaching much people. It was Barnabas who got Paul started on his great life work. It was here at Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians. A dear servant of the Lord has written: “Little did the vulgar rabble of the streets of Antioch, or the scented and perfumed debauchees of the groves of Daphne, when they spoke the word ‘Christian’ in derision or quiet contempt and scorn, imagine that after Antioch with all its temples and palaces and groves and idols had become a heap of ruins, the city would be remembered chiefly because there the followers of Jesus were first called ‘Christians’ and because from thence Paul and Barnabas set out to preach the gospel to the world.”

Being commissioned and directed by the Holy Ghost these two companions, Barnabas and Paul, leave Antioch on this first great missionary journey. They went to the port city of Seleucia, where they boarded a ship bound for Cyprus. Compared to this voyage and its results the voyages of Columbus, Magellan and

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others count for little, for this voyage marked the beginning of the sending forth of God's message of grace to all the world. At the conclusion of this missionary tour Paul summed it up by rehearsing all that God had done with them, and how He had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. It is important to note here that it was through Paul that God opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. The door of faith was not opened to the Gentiles on the day of Pentecost with Peter using the keys of the kingdom and calling upon Israel to repent. The Church of this dispensation is a joint-body composed of Jew and Gentile, and there surely was no joint-body on the day of Pentecost.

The labors of these two faithful servants of God, Paul and Barnabas, was marked by glorious triumphs of the gospel, but marked by trials and testings as well. They were run out of Antioch in Pisidia, had to flee from Iconium where they were planning to kill them, and at Lystra Paul was stoned and left for dead, but God raised him up. Then these two showed their mettle by retracing their steps visiting the same cities where they had been persecuted, confirming and establishing the saints and exhorting them to continue in the faith in spite of suffering. Through all these experiences Barnabas stood shoulder to shoulder with Paul as a trustworthy companion and loyal friend.

After their rigorous travels and return to Antioch, Paul and Barnabas went to the council at Jerusalem which had been convened to settle the matter of the Gentiles' relationship to the law. There they both reported what great things God had wrought among the Gentiles by them. James was the recognized leader at Jerusalem and his sentence was that the Gentiles were not to be troubled with the old Jewish laws. Paul and Barnabas carried this opinion back to the church at Antioch, where they continued teaching and preaching the Word of the Lord. Some time later Paul suggested that the two of them revisit all the cities where they had formerly been to see how the believers were faring. Barnabas was willing, but was determined to take with them his nephew Mark. Paul was opposed to this, as Mark had

started out with them on their first journey but for some reason, along the way, had deserted them. It is hard to say who was right or wrong in this dispute, for we can understand the feelings of both. Barnabas knew his nephew better than Paul, saw real potential in him, and felt he was worthy of another chance. On the other hand, Paul felt the work of the Lord demanded the very best and since they were returning to the lion's den and things might get rough they needed one who was thoroughly dependable. It is sad but true that even today the work of the Lord suffers because there are those in the churches who have a position or hold an office for which they are ill-suited and unreliable, and yet through timidity on the part of the oversight are not replaced. At any rate, the contention between Paul and Barnabas was so great that each decided to go their own way.

It would seem the real reason for the separation was something that had preceded this and which still rankled both of them. And now, good man that he was, we must take note of one time in which Barnabas failed. While they were at Antioch Peter had come for a visit, and freely fellowshiped and ate with the Gentile believers, as he had every right to do. But then he saw "certain come from James." These were Jews from Jerusalem and it was evident the decision of the council had not removed the resentment and jealousy they had for the Gentiles. When Peter saw these he was afraid they would carry the report back that he was eating with the Gentiles, and so he separated himself and had nothing more to do with them, and the most surprising thing of all was that Barnabas dissembled likewise and followed Peter in this action.

What was Paul's reaction to this behavior on the part of Peter and Barnabas? If he was like some of those today he would have said, "Now we don't want any controversy, so let them just go their way and we will go ours." But such words never fell from the lips of this faithful warrior. Where truth was at stake he was ever ready to take up the sword and fight in defense of it. Filled with a holy zeal for the truth he withstood Peter and

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Barnabas to the face, and publicly rebuked them, for they were to be blamed. One need not go around looking for controversy, but to remain silent when the truth of God's Word is involved is plain cowardice. It is through the courage of those like Paul that the truth is preserved. Dr. Macartney has beautifully written concerning this incident: "If Paul strikes us as heroic when he encourages the panic-stricken company on the shipwrecked vessel in the Mediterranean, or when he hushed the howling mob in the streets of Jerusalem, or when he goes back to Lystra and Iconium and Antioch, just after he had been persecuted and driven out of these cities, his heroism reached a high water mark when he stood up in the assembly in the church at Antioch and rebuked Peter and Barnabas for disloyalty to their own convictions and disloyalty to the freedom of the grace of God in Jesus Christ."

Though Barnabas and Paul were estranged for a brief season we are sure their mutual affection did not cease. There was reconciliation. Paul later identifies himself with this good companion and speaks of "I only and Barnabas," He also wrote to Timothy and said, "Take Mark, and bring him with thee; for he is profitable to me for the ministry." And even Peter wrote concerning "our beloved brother Paul."

Here we take leave of friend and companion Barnabas. He was a loyal, loving, unselfish companion to have. He truly exemplified the Scripture which says: "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." May we profit by his acquaintance.

Silas

“One of the chief men among the brethren”

Those who were Paul’s companions and traveled with him were highly favored, and justly so, for the Scriptures indicate those traits which made them so valuable in the service of Christ. Their steadfast and sacrificial lives should speak to each one of us, for if we have embraced the Pauline theology we are Paul’s companions also. The desire of those friends, companions and helpers was to aid in making known the glorious truth that had been revealed to and through the Apostle Paul by the Head of the Church, our Lord Jesus Christ. We, as Paul’s companions, should have that same desire, to further the gospel of God’s grace and to enable all to see those kindred truths having to do with God’s purpose in this present dispensation.

But now to brother Silas. When Paul and Barnabas had a disagreement and separated, Paul chose Silas to be his partner on the second missionary journey. Paul wanted to revisit the cities where he had been previously and to learn how the brethren were getting along. Paul had a true shepherd’s heart. He wasn’t content just to evangelize and then go on his way. He wanted the sheep nurtured, strengthened, stablished, and going on with the Lord. In the cities where churches were established he would tarry till the converts were grounded in the truth, or else leave one of his partners to do this. The Pauline method was to get souls saved through the preaching of the gospel and then to teach them, instruct them in the truth, so they could become

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teachers of others. Some were trained for the place of leadership and left with instructions to feed the flock over which they had been made overseers. And when Paul left for other fields of labor he was ever mindful of those left behind, as he wrote to the Philippians: “Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart.” Incidentally, there are those today who talk about discipling. This is not Pauline terminology. Those who use this expression think they are working under the great commission and are told to disciple all nations.

In Acts 15:22 we learn that Silas was one of the chief men among the brethren in the Jerusalem church. He was highly esteemed and was one of those entrusted with carrying the decrees of the council to the Gentiles at Antioch, assuring them they were not under the Mosaic law and that circumcision was not for them obligatory. Now, the two of them, Paul and Silas, start out from Antioch. They went north, then east, through Syria and Cilicia, no doubt stopping at Tarsus and ministering to Paul’s kinfolk and others won to Christ during the years he had spent there. Leaving Tarsus the two missionaries came to the Cilician Gates, a pass that runs for eighty miles through the Taurus mountains. About 300 years earlier Alexander the Great had come through this pass with his armies as he invaded the East. Now a greater than Alexander, with companion Silas, was passing through with a message that would revolutionize the world. Alexander was not aware of it, but God was using him to prepare the way for the preaching of the gospel. His conquests had made the Greek language universal and it was in this language that the New Testament was to be written and it was the language used by Paul as he visited the Gentile world.

Arriving at Derbe and Lystra, Paul and Silas so ministered the Word that “the churches were established in the faith, and increased in number daily” (Acts 16:5). Among the believers there was a young man, Timothy, who had perhaps been converted at Paul’s first visit. He was well reported of by the brethren, and had so grown in his Christian life and had become so

useful that Paul determined that he should join him and Silas as they continued their journey. Having traversed the region of Galatia, Paul purposed to preach the Word in Asia. However, they were forbidden by the Holy Ghost to do so. Then they determined to go into Bithynia, a populous area on the Black Sea, but again they were forbidden. There was only one direction left so they headed for Troas, on the Aegean Sea. It was at Troas that Dr. Luke joined the party. Perhaps he had been summoned because of Paul's health. Referring to that time he wrote: "Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first" (Galatians 4:13).

One night at Troas Paul had a vision. He saw a man of Macedonia praying for him to come over and help them. Who was this man? Some think it may have been the Lord himself. He is the Son of Man and it could be that He was here identifying with those people in their need and praying for their help. At any rate, Paul took this as the leading of the Lord and immediately the little company took ship and headed for Neapolis, the port city of Philippi. This was the invasion of Europe, not by some military host, but by four men armed with the Word of God which is quick and powerful and sharper than any sword. How we thank God for leading His servants in this direction, for if He had allowed them to go east then perhaps China and India and Japan would have been the Christian lands and we of the western world would have been in heathen darkness.

The work in Europe had a most humble beginning. Philippi was not a commercial city and therefore not of much interest to the Jews, so there was no synagogue. A few godly people, however, met for prayer each sabbath day by a river side. The missionaries soon heard about this and the next sabbath met with these devout women and preached Christ to them. One of these was a businesswoman, Lydia, "whose heart the Lord opened, so that she attended unto the things which were spoken by Paul." Note the expression: "Whose heart the Lord opened." We need to keep this ever before us, that salvation is of the Lord and as

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we give forth the Word we are altogether dependent on the working of God's Spirit. We need to pray for the hearers, that God would open their hearts, enlighten the eyes of their understanding, and reveal the truth to them. Not only was Lydia saved, but also her household, the first converts on European soil.

There was another woman at Philippi, a slave girl who possessed the spirit of divination, or fortune telling. For some reason she was attracted to Paul and his companions and followed them about, crying out, "These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation" (Acts 16:17). No one ever gave a better testimony than this about Paul and his companions. They were indeed the servants of the most high God, and they had come to Philippi to shew them the way of salvation. But Paul was grieved, for by this action the gospel testimony was being hindered. Also, God's work does not need the endorsement of the world, particularly the spirit world. It may be, too, that Paul saw in this girl, in spite of her disordered mind, a longing after God. At any rate, Paul commanded the spirit in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of the girl, and it came out. What power in the matchless name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The masters of this girl, seeing their hopes of further gain were now gone, and desiring to avenge themselves on the man responsible for this, laid hold of Paul and Silas. They brought them to the magistrates and accused them of being Jews and teaching customs which were not lawful for the Romans to observe. This stirred up the populace and the magistrates, without further inquiry or the semblance of a trial, commanded to strip and beat them. The record says: "And when they had laid many stripes upon them" (Acts 16:23). This was probably one of the five times when Paul received forty stripes save one. Following the beating they were cast into prison and the jailor charged with keeping them safely. He thrust them into the inner prison which was a lower dungeon with a mud floor, where they were laid on

their backs and their feet made fast in the stocks. In all of this, friend and companion Silas was side by side with Paul and suffering just the same as he. “A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity” (Proverbs 17:17).

Here were these two faithful servants of Christ, their backs bleeding and painful, laid out in a most uncomfortable position in that foul smelling prison pit. Their distress and discomfort could hardly have been greater, yet what was their reaction to this hateful treatment? “And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God; and the prisoners heard them.” What were they singing? Perhaps one of the Psalms, like the 46th, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” And the prisoners heard them. Those prison walls which had often echoed with the oaths and curses of hardened criminals now echoed with the praises of the two redeemed and rejoicing saints. But suddenly the songs were interrupted: there was a great earthquake, the prison walls rocked, the doors were thrown open and the bonds fell from the prisoner’s feet. The jailor, aroused from his sleep and seeing the prison doors open, assumed the prisoners had escaped and was about to take his own life, for he knew if that were the case his life would be forfeit in the morning. Paul seemed to sense what the jailor was about to do, and cried with a loud voice to assure him they were still there. The jailor called for a light and entered the dungeon, and shaking with fear fell down before Paul and Silas and asked that most important question, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

What did this heathen jailor know about being saved? He had no doubt heard the slave girl crying out that these men had come to tell them the way of salvation, or how to be saved. Paul and his company had been in the city for several weeks and it is likely the jailor heard them preaching. He had dismissed the whole idea, though, not feeling there was anything from which he needed to be saved. Now, convicted of his sin, he cries out from the depth of his soul, “What must I do to be saved?”

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In answering the jailor's question, or any other Scriptural question, it is imperative that we rightly divide the Word of truth and make sure that our answer is based on that portion of the Word having to do with the present dispensation of God's grace. What may be truth for God's people in one dispensation may not be true in another. For instance, when John the Baptist was "preaching the baptism for the remission of sins" and the people came to him he told them, "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance." That is not what we would tell a seeking sinner today. When a lawyer came to Jesus asking what one must do to inherit eternal life the Lord referred him to the law and said, "This do, and thou shalt live." We would tell that person today that eternal life is the free gift of God and is not obtained on the basis of our doing. When Peter's hearers on the day of Pentecost asked what they must do, Peter replied, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." That is not God's message for today. In rightly dividing we must recognize that God brought in a new dispensation and ushered in a whole new program with the Apostle Paul.

What was Paul's answer to the jailor's question? He simply said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Of course they told him more than this; they told him what he was to believe concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. It says: "And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house." They told him that the Lord Jesus Christ, by His death on Calvary's cross, fully atoned for our sin; that He put away our sin by the sacrifice of Himself; that we are to cast our doing down and rest alone on what Christ has done for us. One of Paul's great themes was that of justification by faith alone, apart altogether from law-keeping, religious endeavor or man's doing. This is the preaching of the cross, which is foolishness to the natural man. To tell some people that salvation is on the basis of faith alone, our trust in the work of another, is altogether contrary to human reasoning and is branded as foolishness. Filled with miserable pride, man thinks he must have some

part in it. The great English poet, William Cowper, in the following well describes man's attitude toward this doctrine of faith alone.

*O how unlike the complex works of man
 Heaven's easy, artless, unencumbered plan.
 No meretricious graces to beguile,
 No clustering ornaments to clog the pile.
 From ostentation as from weakness free,
 It stands like the blue arch of Heaven we see.
 Majestic in its own simplicity.
 Inscribed above the portal from afar,
 Conspicuous as the brightness of a star,
 Legible only by the light they give,
 Stand the soul-quickenng words, BELIEVE AND LIVE.
 Too many, shocked at what should charm them most,
 Despise the plain direction and are lost,
 "Heaven on such terms!" they cry with proud disdain,
 Incredible, impossible, and vain.
 Rebel because 'tis easy to obey,
 And scorn for its own sake the gracious way.*

When morning dawns the magistrates, perhaps a bit worried because of the action they had taken the night before, sent word to the keeper of the prison, saying, "Let the men go." But Paul refused to go. He declared that what the magistrates had done was illegal as both he and Silas were Roman citizens. Further, he said they had publicly beaten and imprisoned them and now they needn't think they could get rid of them privately. If they wanted them out they would have to come themselves and publicly apologize and escort them out. This they were forced to do. In forcing the magistrates to take this action Paul was not thinking simply of himself and Silas, but mainly of those who would be left behind. They would be far less prone, now, to trouble the new Christians. They urged Paul and Silas to leave the city, as they wanted no further trouble, but they were in no hurry to do this either. They went to the house of Lydia, where they met

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with all the believers and encouraged and fortified them. How long they tarried with the brethren at Philippi is unclear, but they finally departed, leaving behind the church which Paul loved above all others.

In all the excitement at Philippi there is no mention of Luke and Timothy. Perhaps they were having an all-night prayer meeting in Lydia's house, and perhaps it was in answer to their prayers that God sent the earthquake. Luke left the others at this point, and Paul and Silas and Timothy resumed their missionary journey. Leaving Philippi the little party headed west on one of the old Roman roads, the Via Egnatia which ran across Macedonia to the Adriatic Sea. It must have been difficult going for the two who had suffered the scourging and the rough treatment, but with joy in their hearts they pressed on. They passed a couple of minor cities but continued on toward the more important city of Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue. Here they began their ministry, showing from the Scriptures that when Christ (the Messiah) came He would have to suffer and die and rise again from the dead, and that this Jesus, whom they were preaching, was indeed the Christ. In addition to the Jews in the synagogue there were many God-fearing Greeks, and a great number of these Greeks heeded Paul's message and believed. This angered the unbelieving Jews and they set all the city in an uproar. What riled them up? They were "moved with envy." This was one of the sins that brought about Christ's death. When they brought Jesus to Pilate we read that he "knew that for envy they had delivered him." What a damnable sin is this sin of envy, of being jealous of others, and yet how prevalent even among Christians. On this occasion all Thessalonica was in an uproar and they were seeking the servants of the Lord to do them harm, but the brethren got Paul and Silas out of the city by night and on the way to Berea.

At Berea they followed the same procedure and began their ministry in the synagogue, but met with better reception. In connection with this there is a verse often quoted: "These were

more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11). Christians are urged to be Bereans, and rightly so, to lend an ear to the preaching, and then to do something more: to go to God’s Word and make sure that what they heard was according to the Book. It should be said here that there were some noble Thessalonians. There is no record of any church at Berea, but many at Thessalonica believed and a church was established to which Paul addressed two of his epistles, and in which he praised them highly for their faith and labor of love.

The Lord blessed the preaching of the Word at Berea and many believed, including some women of high estate as well as a goodly number of men. When word reached Thessalonica, though, that the gospel was being preached in Berea, the Jews sent some of their ruffians to Berea to again stir up the people against Paul. Before the trouble could get started the brethren thought it advisable for Paul to leave. They escorted him to the seaport where they boarded a vessel which took them down the coast to Athens. There they left the apostle, carrying back a message for Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible.

As Paul walked about Athens, while waiting for his companions, his spirit was aroused by the sight of all the idols. On every hand there were temples and altars erected to some deity, and Paul was so stirred by this that he began to reason with the Jews in the synagogue. Then in the market place he encountered the philosophers and idlers who gathered there to throw out new ideas. Paul seized the opportunity to join them and to bear a testimony as to the one true God, and he also preached to them Jesus and the resurrection. His speech was so intense and he spoke with such assurance that some called him a babbler. Others, who were always desirous of hearing some new thing, brought him to Areopagus, and there, at historic Mars’ Hill, Paul addressed these worldly wise, humanistic thinkers. He told them there were many gods, but only one true God, and this one true God

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had created all things and needed nothing from them. He did not need their temples, statues, altars, or any other work of men's hands. And this God was the Governor of the universe, all was ordered by Him and under His control, and some day in resurrection all would be judged by Him. At this point some interrupted and mocked and the audience disbanded. Well illustrated was the text: "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (I Corinthians 1:21). However, the Word never returns void and there were some who believed, including Dionysius the Areopagite (member of the court held on Mars' Hill) and a woman named Damaris.

Paul did not spend much time at Athens as the likelihood of establishing an assembly there seemed rather remote, so he left and went on to Corinth, about forty miles to the west. Silas and Timothy had joined Paul briefly at Athens but had been sent back to Thessalonica, and now they rejoined him at Corinth. Here they spent eighteen months teaching the Word of God. It was during this time that the two letters to the Thessalonians were written, in each of which the apostle includes Silas' name in the salutation as a fellow-worker with him.

As another chapter closes we say goodbye to comrade-in-arms Silas. He stood in the forefront of the battle with Paul and had some battle scars to prove it. What a comfort and encouragement to the apostle to have him stand shoulder to shoulder with him in the midst of the fight. It is because of men like this, willing to hazard their lives and well-being, that we have the truth in hand today. Silas was one who was willing to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. He bore the cross, unmindful of self, and will one day wear the crown.

Luke

“The beloved physician”

The account of the heroic lives of these companions of Paul, all of whom were dedicated servants of Christ, ought truly to inspire us. Like the prophets of old it may be said of them, “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition.” Among the many to be admired, there is none more deserving than Dr. Luke. He was a friend indeed, true to the very end.

The background of Luke is rather obscure. Some think he was a Philippian and others that he was from Antioch in Syria. Whether he was a Jew or Gentile is also a matter of debate. Those thinking he was a Gentile refer to Colossians 4:10-11. Here Paul mentions some “who are of the circumcision” and then a few verses later refers to Luke, and because Luke seems to be distinguished from the others they assume he must be a Gentile. This is rather thin evidence on which to base such a conclusion. It would seem strange that, all the other writers of the Holy Scriptures being Jews, God would make this one exception and use a Gentile. When Paul was at Jerusalem the Jews charged him with bringing a Gentile into the temple and polluting the holy place.

They had seen Trophimus with him and supposed he had brought him into the temple. Now we know Luke was with Paul in Jerusalem at that time and in his company more than any oth-

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ers, yet the Jews did not get upset about Luke, evidently knowing or believing that he was a Jew. It is true that the gospel which bears his name, as well as the book of Acts, was addressed to Theophilus, a Roman official, but because of his profession as an educated medical man, he could very well have been acquainted with many Gentiles in high position. There could have been no one better suited to accompany and serve the apostle to the Gentiles. The following is written by Scofield in his forward to Luke's gospel and we are inclined to agree with him.

“The writer of the third gospel is called by Paul ‘the beloved physician’ (Col. 4:14) and, as we learn from the Acts, was Paul’s frequent companion. He was of Jewish ancestry, but his correct Greek marks him as a Jew of the dispersion. Tradition says that he was a Jew of Antioch, as Paul was of Tarsus.”

There is a tradition also that Luke was not only a physician, but also a painter. This may be nothing more than tradition yet he did indeed paint some beautiful word pictures. In his gospel he portrays the miraculous birth and matchless life of the Man among men, the Man Christ Jesus, while in the Acts he gives us a splendid portrait of Christ’s ambassador bearing Christ’s message to all the world. We would know very little about the apostle if it were not for Luke. He accompanied the apostle much of the time but about the only way we sense his presence is by his use of the pronouns “we” and “us.” Also in what he says of Paul and abstains from saying about himself, we see not only his ardent friendship but also his modesty and humility.

Luke joined the other three, Paul and Silas and Timothy, at Troas and is mentioned for the first time in Acts 16:10. This meeting was not happenstance, but most surely providential. In spite of Paul’s untiring zeal and arduous labors we are not to think of him as being strong and robust. It was far otherwise, for he was in bodily presence weak and often subject to the infirmi-

ties of the flesh. To read the account of his sufferings in II Corinthians 11:23-33 is to wonder how he survived at all. But his precious Lord, the One who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, gave him sufficient grace for his need and then in love provided him with a personal physician. That was dear Dr. Luke, a companion whose friendship gave Paul inner strength and whose medical skill contributed to his well-being.

At Troas Paul had the night vision of the man of Macedonia calling for help. We read: “And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel unto them” (Acts 16:10). Notice the word “immediately.” Paul was a man of action. When doors were opened and he discerned the Lord’s leading he wasted no time. It was forward march. Oh that we might be as prompt. We dream of doing something tomorrow or in the future and pass up the doors of opportunity open to us now. It is good to read about our commission in the fifth chapter of Second Corinthians but we shouldn’t stop there. The inspired writer goes right on to the opening verses of chapter six and says (and we paraphrase): “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ and to us has been given the ministry of reconciliation, so then, as workers together let us not receive the grace of God in vain but let us get busy and what we are going to do let’s do it now, for now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of salvation.” The Lord said to His disciples, “Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest, behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest” (John 4:35).

The little intrepid band of four did not linger. They got busy immediately and we see them going along the waterfront seeking a vessel bound for Macedonia. Finding such a vessel we watch as with little or no luggage they board the ship. The sails are hoisted and the vessel sails out of the harbor and onto the Aegean Sea on this momentous and historic voyage. What a thrill to be sailing with Paul. This can be the lot of everyone. Dr.

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Ironside has written: “What is it to sail with Paul? It is to know Paul’s Saviour and to share Paul’s blessings.” All who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as their all-sufficient Saviour are then, as sinners saved by God’s grace, sailing with Paul over life’s sea.

We have already taken note of the events connected with their arrival at Philippi. The work there began with a few women meeting for prayer at the river side. These were the first European converts and this became the church that was so dear to the heart of Paul and which was of tremendous help to him over the years. He wrote of them, “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” (Philippians 4:15-16). Paul’s stay at Philippi was comparatively brief, and though accompanied with blessing it was also associated with strife. It was here that Paul and Silas were beaten and jailed and Paul later referred to this as shameful treatment (I Thessalonians 2:2). Luke stayed behind when Paul and the others left and it was about five years later, here at Philippi, that he rejoined Paul and became his constant companion.

In the interim, while Luke was not with him, Paul had visited several places, spending a year and a half at Corinth and three years at Ephesus. His ministry at Ephesus was signally blessed of the Lord. Many miracles were wrought through Paul and we read: “So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed” (Acts 19:20). There was such a work of God that the business of the silversmiths suffered as people ceased buying their idolatrous wares. Among the items they made and sold were silver models of the temple of Diana. Seeing their income being jeopardized they organized a march and caused a great uproar. If they could have found Paul he would have suffered but his friends had taken him into protective custody. The riot was finally quelled with no great damage being done.

After the uproar at Ephesus Paul again crossed the Aegean and visited the churches in Macedonia, exhorting and encouraging the saints. From there he went south to Corinth for a promised visit, staying with the Corinthian saints for three months. His plan was then to sail from Corinth to Syria on his way to Jerusalem to observe the Passover, but just before sailing it was discovered the Jews had a plan to kill him. Some of them would have been on the same vessel going up to the feast and perhaps they planned to throw Paul overboard when they were at sea. This caused a change in plans and it was decided to go back to Macedonia and Philippi. This time he had plenty of company for there were seven who went with him (Acts 20:4). Arriving at Philippi he was reunited with Luke and they were inseparable during the remainder of the apostle's life.

The seven took ship from Philippi and went on before to Troas and a bit later Paul and Luke followed them. Let us take a minute and look in on one of the services at Troas as described in Acts 20:6-11. This service is being held in a room on the third floor of a building and the room is quite hot from the many lights being used. The room is filled to capacity. We see Paul standing in a central place. Near him is Doctor Luke. On one side of the room we see Gaius, who had been treated roughly during the riot at Ephesus. In Romans 16:23 Paul refers to Gaius as his host and indicated Gaius had oft entertained him and other Christians in his home at Corinth. Over yonder in the room is Tychicus, whom Paul spoke of as "a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord" (Ephesians 6:21). And there, with eyes fixed on the speaker, sits Timothy, Paul's own dear son in the faith. Blessed companions all. The room is crowded with the saints of Troas. Paul has much to tell them and will be preaching practically all night, but they sit expectantly, drinking in the Word, for they are not bothered with the ear trouble that afflicts many in the present day. What a delightful spectacle is this, precious in the sight of the Lord, and a far cry from the gatherings that dominate the scene today with all the religious trappings and sensuous programs that people need to satisfy the flesh.

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How few are content with Paul's gospel, the rich Word of truth.

We cannot leave this scene at Troas without noting an unusual happening during the service. A young man, Eutychus, was sitting by a window and about the midnight hour went to sleep and fell from the third loft to the ground below. He was taken up for dead but Paul went down and he was restored and they all returned to the upper chamber and resumed their meeting. Now it is unlikely this narrative would be included in Scripture if it was without spiritual significance. What may be learned from it? First of all, we learn that Paul has been preaching long. For almost two thousand years Paul has been preaching. The Lord has been speaking to the world, not through Moses or Peter or any other, but He has been speaking through Paul. Secondly, we learn that the church fell asleep under Paul's preaching and had a great fall.

The third story from which Eutychus fell reminds us of the third heaven into which Paul was caught up. With the call of Abraham God revealed his purpose having to do with Israel and the earth. When that nation was set aside God was through, for a season, with both Israel and the earth. Then it was through Paul that God revealed his purpose to bring on the scene a called-out company of believers, sinners saved by His grace constituting the Church, the Body of Christ, and this Church would be heavenly in character and have no connection with the earth. This Church is seen as seated in the heavenly places (Gr. *epourani-ous*, super-heavenlies) and blessed there with all spiritual blessings. The apostolic age had scarcely ended when the Church went to sleep, insensitive to Paul's preaching concerning the true character of the Church. The result was a great fall and the Church became just an earthly organization, with an earthly outlook, earthly aims, and even exercising earthly power.

Our friend Eutychus was restored to life by Paul and brought back up to the third story. Thank God, like Eutychus there has been some restoration for the Church. After the long

night of the dark ages Luther and the other reformers used Paul's preaching and justification by faith alone to arouse the Church from its long sleep. Later, men like Darby used Paul's preaching to awaken Christians to the truth of the One Body of Christ and the Blessed Hope of the Church. But much work remains in getting Christians off the ground and up again to the third story, the heavenlies. How few professing Christians know anything about their heavenly position and heavenly possessions in Christ. How few walk as citizens of heaven, confessing they are only strangers and pilgrims on earth. Read carefully the following, written over a century and a half ago by the beloved C.H. Mackintosh:

“It is of the utmost importance that the Christian reader should understand the doctrine of the Church's heavenly character. ... To be soundly instructed in the heavenly origin, heavenly position, and heavenly destiny of the Church, is the most effectual safeguard against worldliness in the Christian's present path, and also against false teaching in reference to his future hopes. Every system of doctrine or discipline which would connect the Church with the world, either in her present condition or her future prospects, must be wrong, and must exert an unhallowed influence. The church is not of the world. Her life, her position, her hopes, are all heavenly in the very highest sense of the word. ... The doctrine of the Church's heavenly character was developed in all its power and beauty by the Holy Ghost in the apostle Paul. ... We must never forget that every tendency of the human mind not only falls short of but stands actually opposed to all this divine truth about the Church. The heart naturally clings to earth, and the thought of an earthly corporation is attractive to it. Hence we may expect that the truth of the Church's heavenly character will only be appreciated and carried out by a very small and feeble minority.”

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After seven days our party of travelers left Troas. The rest of the party went by ship down along the coast, while Paul had decided to go by foot and meet them at Assos, about twenty miles south. It had taken Paul and Luke five days by vessel to cross from Philippi to Troas because of contrary winds and a rough sea, so perhaps Paul had enough sailing for the moment. More likely he just felt the need to be alone, and as he walked he was probably thinking of his planned trip to Jerusalem and of the trouble he might encounter there. And as he walked he had a most blessed time talking to the best companion of all.

At Assos Paul joined the others on the ship. This was probably a mercantile ship that stopped at the various ports along the coast to deliver or pick up cargo. They sailed right by Ephesus as Paul did not want to be delayed as he desired to reach Jerusalem in time for the day of Pentecost. He did, though, send word for the leading brethren of the Ephesian church to meet him at Miletus, about thirty-six miles to the south. They had such a meeting somewhere along the sea shore, and Paul exhorted and bade a fond farewell to these church elders. Paul had labored in their midst for three years and he reminded them of the untiring effort put forth on their behalf, and how he kept back nothing that was profitable to them and had declared unto them the whole counsel of God. We could look with much profit at this touching farewell message to these men but such is not the purpose of this account. It would be pleasing to God if every one of His servants would so labor that when leaving a particular field they could repeat these words of the apostle. One verse in this message stands out and this is a verse we often quote. Paul had been warned of the bonds and afflictions that awaited him if he continued to press on. He replied, “But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24).

In spite of the pleading of his friends and even though he

himself knew of the danger, he would not turn back. Just as our blessed Lord “steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51) so did His faithful follower. He was “ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 21:13).

There was another who did not shrink from danger and that was loyal companion Luke. He went with Paul and faced the howling, blood-thirsty mob at Jerusalem. He stayed with Paul during the two years at Caesarea and while there wrote his gospel. He was a fellow traveler on the long and trying voyage to Rome, suffering shipwreck enroute. From the prison in Rome Paul could write that “Luke, the beloved physician” was with him (Colossians 4:14). In the letter to Philemon, which accompanied the Colossian epistle, Paul referred to him as “Luke, my fellow-labourer” (Philemon 24). Luke was not only a medical man and inspired writer he was a preacher as well, standing with Paul and the others and boldly proclaiming the Word of truth.

In the last letter that came from the pen of the aged apostle, his second letter to Timothy, he writes that all in Asia had turned away from him (1:15). He also tells us that at his first trial before the emperor no man stood with him, that all forsook him (4:16). He states that Demas, once a close co-worker, had forsaken him (4:10). How alone he must have felt. But there was one standing by him and he could say, “Luke is with me” (4:11). The following is from the writings of Kenneth Wuest:

“How beautiful it is to see that the beloved physician should feel that his place was beside Paul when the end was approaching. How true to his medical instinct this was; not to depreciate the grace of God moving him in his heart to the same action. What a trophy of God’s grace Luke is. Here is a Greek doctor of medicine, leaving his medical practice to be the personal physician of an itinerant preacher, to share his hardship and privations, his dangers, and toil. The great success of

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the apostle whom he attended in a medical way is due in some measure, to the physician's watchful care over his patient. ... Luke knew all the marks of the Lord Jesus on the body of the apostle, the scars left after the assaults on his person. He had bathed and tended these wounds. Now his patient, grown old before his time, was suffering the discomforts of a Roman cell. He had to be guarded against disease. 'Only Luke is with me.' What a comfort he was to Paul!"

Thank God for friends and companions like Luke, who can be depended upon to stand with you through hard times as well as good. Luke was such a friend. We like to think that loving, caring, faithful Luke was with the great apostle walking by his side to the place of execution, and perhaps caring for the body after Paul's spirit had soared away to be with the One he loved above all others.

Lydia

“Whose heart the Lord opened”

In thinking of the companions of Paul we cannot overlook the women, for there were many godly, faithful women who were of tremendous help in carrying forward the work of the Lord. Because of Paul's teaching, received of the Lord, concerning the place of the women and their Christian duties, he has often been accused of being a misogynist or woman hater. This was certainly not the case. He spoke highly of many dear sisters in Christ and praised them highly for their devoted service. The Scriptural record indicates that the women had a very important part both in connection with Paul's ministry and also in the local churches. And even today if it were not for the dedicated labors of godly women most churches would be forced to close their doors.

Before getting acquainted with Lydia, the subject of this chapter, it will be good to consider what the Word has to say about some of the other women who helped make known God's message of grace. In the 16th chapter of Romans the apostle refers by name to a number of women. In the very first verse he speaks of Phoebe. She was a servant, or deaconess, of the little church at Cenchrea, the seaport of Corinth. She was a deaconess not because she had been elected or appointed to this office. She simply proved to all that she was a deaconess or servant of the church by her manner of life; by visiting the sick, helping those in need, and performing the many tasks that came to hand. She

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surely epitomized the truth of I Timothy 5:10, “Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saint’s feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.” Phoebe was a choice saint, to be commended to all, and she had the high honor of carrying a priceless treasure to its destination, the Epistle to the Romans. William R. Newell has written ...

“Phoebe is honored with a mighty mission; she is to carry this great epistle to the Christians at Rome! That was a priceless burden! No Spanish galleon freighted with gold ever bore such a treasure as God let dear Phoebe carry to the center of the Gentile world. Yes, as He told Jeremiah, He ‘watches over’ His Word. It came safely, right down to us, though the feeble hands of Phoebe brought it on its way.”

Another woman mentioned here (vs. 3) is Priscilla, along with her husband Aquila. What valued friends and helpers they were and we will be getting to know them better in a future chapter. Mary is the next name in this Hall of Fame (vs. 6) and this is the only reference to her in the New Testament. Paul said she “bestowed much labour on us.” God is not unrighteous to forget our work and labour of love and neither was the Apostle Paul. How often we fail in this. How often when the work and labor of others has benefitted and blessed us, we forget, and fail to express our thanks and appreciation. Tryphena and Tryphosa (vs. 12) were sisters who were always laboring for the Lord; worthy helpers indeed. Then the beloved Persis (vs. 12) who also labored much in the Lord. And what about Rufus’ mother (vs. 13) whom Paul said was a mother to him also. She must have bestowed much loving care on him. The business of all these precious women was to help. In I Corinthians 12:28 along with the gifts of apostles, prophets, teachers is the gift of “helps.” This gift should be coveted and cultivated by all of God’s children.

The only reference to Lydia is contained in a couple of verses but she played a most important part in the extension of the gospel. In obedience to the Macedonian call Paul and his companions had arrived at Philippi. We read: “And on the sabbath day we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us” (Acts 16:13-15). Here is the first preaching of the gospel on European soil and Lydia and her household are the first European converts. This was a rather modest beginning for the mighty work which resulted. One result was the important work done by Paul on that continent. They referred to his company as “these that have turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6). Another result was that later practically every country in Europe became Christian, at least nominally.

One of the first things to be noted is that this great work began with prayer. It began with the godly women who came regularly to the river side to pray. Every great movement of God has been prefaced by prayer. It was true with Peter and the others working under the kingdom program. Before the outpouring of the Holy Ghost and the thousands converted on the day of Pentecost there was prayer. Read Acts 1:14, “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women (here are the women again—bless them), and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with the brethren.” It needs repeating again and again that there is little blessing apart from prayer. Prayer in our day seems to be a lost art. Most Christians, if honest, would have to confess their sin of prayerlessness. Most churches no longer have a prayer meeting and yet wonder why the Lord’s work moves at a snails’ pace. The reason is that too little time is

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spent fasting in the upper room and too much time is spent feasting in the supper room. We need to say as did the disciples, “Lord, teach us to pray.”

Many things could be said about Lydia. She was a resident of Philippi but came originally from Thyatira, which was in a region of Asia called Lydia. Whether she got her name from this fact we do not know. She was a businesswoman and she sold purple garments or the dyes used in their manufacture. In the narrative in Luke 16 we read that the rich man was clothed in purple and fine linen. Lydia was doubtless well educated, intelligent, and evidently quite prosperous. She was a worshipper of God and a woman of prayer. The prayer meeting in which she was prominent was not a haphazard thing. She and the other women met together unfailingly every week. It is not simply the act of prayer that is to be noted but the habit of prayer. These women made it their business each sabbath to pray for the peace of Jerusalem and to honor God. This was Israel’s seventh-day sabbath and what we would again emphasize is Lydia’s devotion in giving God His due; she did not let business or anything else interfere. She thus honored God and God honored her, even as in the case of Cornelius when the angel said, “Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God” (Acts 10:4). We today who are members of the Body of Christ are not sabbatarians, we do not rest in a day but in a person, our Lord Jesus Christ. However, we can be glad that we live in a society where one day each week we can turn aside from mundane affairs and honor God by our attendance at the house of worship. All too many let business or pleasure, family or friends, interfere with their attendance at the divine services. No church could continue if it were not for those like Lydia who are present at the Place of Prayer each week.

Lydia was a Greek proselyte and worshipped God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Now she heard through Paul of the Messiah who should come and who had come in the person of the Lord Jesus, and here we have the operation of grace. As

she listened the Lord opened her heart. The heart of the natural man is closed to God and to the things of God and it is beyond our ability to do anything about it. We have the privilege of preaching the Word, for faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God, but it is God who must speak the life-giving word and open the heart of the hearer. Paul had this in mind when he wrote II Corinthians 4:6, "But God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." God must do it and God does it in response to prayer.

It is again to be noticed that the European work had a very quiet and modest beginning. There were no advance men sent ahead to prepare the way, no big publicity campaigns and no big personalities to draw the crowd. It was just a little company of men speaking to a little company of women, but little is much when God is in it. The Lord delights in the little things. When here in the flesh He used a few loaves and two little fishes to feed the multitude. He used a little child to give an object lesson on humility. He told the little flock not to fear as it was the Father's pleasure to give them the kingdom, and the widow's little gift was more pleasing to Him than the more pretentious gifts. How opposite to all this is man's idea of things. Man despises the little things and looks with disdain at the little flock. Man wants the crowd. Well, Paul had the crowd but it was always out to get him.

In the record before us we read that Lydia and her household were baptized. Does this mean that water baptism is to be practiced under the Pauline message today? At this point in the book of Acts the nation Israel had not yet been finally set aside, it was still a period of transition and much of the old program still remained. In this 16th chapter of Acts Paul had just circumcised Timothy. Are we to practice circumcision today as a religious rite? Paul had just been called to Macedonia by a night vision. Are we to look to such visions today to discern the

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Lord's leading? Paul is about to cast an unclean spirit out of a damsel. Are we to attempt that today? Paul is soon to be delivered from jail by an earthquake. Are we to expect this to happen today? To all of these questions we would have to answer "no," for none of these things are included in God's program for His people today. But now for the next question. Paul baptized Lydia and her household at that time. Are we to practice water baptism today on that account? Be careful in answering this question. If the answer to all the other questions is "no" then we must say "no" to this last question also. To eliminate all the other signs, including also tongues and healings, and to hold on to the water sign is both illogical and poor exegesis. All of these must stand or fall together. In the Acts period water baptism is always linked up with the other signs and what God has joined together let no man put asunder. When Israel is finally out of the picture with Paul's arrival at Rome and the solemn pronouncement of Acts 28:28 all the signs are gone. In the epistles written thereafter there is no mention of miracles, angelic visitations, healings, tongues, water baptisms, passover suppers, or any of the other signs that were in evidence while Israel was still on the scene. In these later epistles we have the normal program for the Body of Christ in this dispensation of the grace of God, when we walk by faith and not by sight and when we have in the completed Word of God all we need to govern our walk, practice and doctrine.

Lydia not only became one of the first members of the Philippian church but the others in her household did so as well. We do not know whether she was married or not or whether there were children. Her household would not only include family but her servants also, and most likely a woman in her position would have many servants. The fact the household followed her example indicates that the godly, devout and consistent life she lived before them had a great influence upon them. We should take a lesson from this. All of us, especially parents, should be careful as to how we live in the home, for our actions do influence others for good or for ill. All too often there is fail-

ure here. It is a great tragedy when the children of Christian parents grow up unsaved and with no desire to live for the Lord.

Another commendable quality to be noted about Lydia was her hospitality. Immediately after her conversion she showed evidence of the new nature in Christ. She had received the gospel into her heart and now she desired to receive the gospel messengers into her home. To paraphrase it she said, "If you consider me now to be a believer, come and stay at my house." She did this not merely as a Christian duty but she sincerely desired them to lodge under her roof. Luke wrote, "And she constrained us." The brethren gladly accepted her invitation and made her home their headquarters during their stay in Philippi.

In those days there were no motels on every hand and in many places Christians would not be too welcome, so it was imperative that they should be mindful of one another. But even today, hospitality can be shown in many ways and all Christians should be characterized by it. The Scripture says that we should be "given to hospitality" (Romans 12:13) and we also read "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (Hebrews 13:2). We sometimes miss a rich blessing by our failure to open our homes and hearts to fellow-Christians and the servants of the Lord.

Lydia is certainly worthy of high honor as one of the first converts of Europe and also as a helper of those who had been called to reach that continent for Christ. If we are challenged and blest as we consider the exemplary lives of these men and women of faith it is only because we see Christ in them. We are confident that the desire of each one of them was that Christ should be magnified in their body and that no man should be seen but Jesus only.

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Apollos

“An eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures”

In this chapter we will be introduced to Apollos, the Alexandrian Jew, a most interesting and brilliant man, but first we would note the events leading up to his appearance. Paul had been in Corinth for a year and a half and had there met Aquila and Priscilla, close friends and among his most faithful helpers. When Paul left Corinth and came to Ephesus he was accompanied by Aquila and Priscilla. At Ephesus Paul went into the synagogue, as was his custom, and reasoned with the Jews. Contrary to what usually happened he here struck a responsive chord and these Jews desired him to remain, but he had taken a vow which had to be completed at Jerusalem and he wanted to be there in time to keep the Passover feast, so he sailed away, leaving Aquila and Priscilla behind at Ephesus. God's hand was in this as there was a work for them to do. They had been with Paul at Corinth for eighteen months and had learned from him. Now they would have the opportunity to teach another. We have the story in Acts 18:24-28, “And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue, whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.”

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Here we meet Apollos. What brought him to Ephesus we do not know. The Bible says he was a Jew of Alexandria, the city founded by Alexander in 332 B.C. Located on the coast of Egypt, Alexandria was a great mercantile and commercial center. From its port Egyptian wheat was exported to Italy and other parts of the world. Two of the vessels on which Paul journeyed to Rome were described as ships of Alexandria. The lighthouse Pharos, one of the Seven Wonders of the World, shined in its harbor. With the decline of Athens, Alexandria had become the cultural and intellectual center of the world. Here flourished the schools of Greek philosophy in which Apollos was educated and it is more than likely that Philo himself was one of his teachers. The greatest library in the world was located in Alexandria and was burned to the ground by Omer, the Muslim caliph, in the seventh century, a great loss to mankind. From the Christian perspective perhaps the greatest thing to distinguish Alexandria was that it was here that seventy scholars translated the Old Testament from the Hebrew to Greek. This was the Greek Septuagint and was the Bible used by the apostles.

Apollos was doubtless an imposing figure, with an attractive personality and a commanding presence. He must have made a deep impression on Luke judging by the language used to describe him. We plainly see the writer's respect and admiration. The first thing noted is that he was an eloquent man. Eloquence is a rare gift but eloquence alone is not sufficient. A person may be an eloquent speaker yet not be proclaiming the truth. Paul warned of such when he wrote to beware of those who "by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Romans 16:18). Paul himself evidently was not noted for eloquence. His critics said his speech was contemptible. Thankfully, Apollos was eloquent in proclaiming the truth for he was mighty in the Scriptures and was instructed in the way of the Lord. He had a firm grasp of the Book and was thoroughly familiar with the Old Testament and the prophecies concerning the coming Messiah. He was fervent in spirit, a trait sadly lack-

ing in many preachers. Fervent means to boil, to glow, to exude warmth. What Apollos knew of the Scriptures was as a fire in his soul and he put forth the Word in such fervid fashion that the hearts of the hearers were warmed. All too often we listen to a sermon and then leave with hearts as cold as when we came in. There is no afterglow. The reason is that, unlike Apollos, the preacher's heart has not been set aglow by the truth he is seeking to make known.

From the above we would have to conclude that Apollos was well qualified and had much to commend him, but ... he knew only the baptism of John. What he knew of this must have been learned from one of John's disciples who had come to Egypt. He knew only what John had preached, that Jesus was the Messiah, that men should repent because the kingdom was soon to be set up, and to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. He knew little, if anything, of the cross. He knew nothing of the resurrection of Christ and the descent of the Holy Spirit, or that the kingdom was being put in postponement and God had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, offering to save by grace anyone who would put their trust in the redemptive work of His Son. In other words he knew only of Jesus in the flesh, of His wonderful life and His ethical and moral teaching, or as Criswell puts it he preached the Jesus of the Sermon on the Mount. It is tragic but true there are tens of thousands today who are just like that. They have only a historical Jesus, one who was a great teacher and by His life became a great example, that we should follow in His steps. They know nothing about His sacrificial and substitutionary atonement putting away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. They know nothing about His glorious resurrection and His present session at God's right hand. Salvation by grace and God's purpose in this present age is still a mystery to them. They know only the Jesus of the Sermon on the Mount. And shame on us that we haven't told them more. In the case of Apollos there were two faithful saints who would tell him more.

The Authorized Version of Acts 18:25 reads, "He spake and

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taught diligently the things of the Lord.” This is not a good translation. The correct translation is “He spake and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus.” Coming to Ephesus Apollos began to preach John’s message in the synagogue with great boldness, preaching the things concerning Jesus and proving from the law and prophets that Jesus was the Messiah. In the audience were Aquila and Priscilla. They rejoiced to hear this bold preaching, but having been taught by Paul they immediately discerned that something was lacking. There is much preaching today in which something is lacking. It is not so much what is said as what is left unsaid. There is a lack and it is usually the key ingredient that is missing. With Apollos, the godly couple, Aquila and Priscilla, determined to do something about it. We read, “They took him unto them.” They made friends with him, lovingly inviting him to their home, and then as they discussed the Scriptures they prayerfully and tactfully “expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly,” making known to him the great truths they had learned from the Apostle Paul.

Here we see the noble character of Apollos. Here was the powerful and eloquent preacher on whose lips hung the multitude and he is sitting at the feet of two lowly tent-makers and being taught by them. He was both humble and teachable. Not many of the so-called clergy would be willing to sit and learn from lay people who had little or no formal education. Why, they have been to Bible school or seminary and have a degree and they are the ones who should be doing the teaching. Apollos was truly marked by his humility and is to be commended. He was also teachable. Aquila and Priscilla told him of the secret made known to Paul by the risen Christ, of the present out-calling, the Church, the Body of Christ, sinners saved by grace and made one with the Son of God’s love and destined for eternal glory. Apollos received this wonderful good news with gladness and we can be certain that he proclaimed the newfound truth with even greater boldness and with more fervency of spirit than ever before.

When Apollos now began to preach this new truth he had learned from Aquila and Priscilla he no doubt found that his audience was not quite so receptive. The Jews might listen to him speak eloquently from the Old Testament showing the prophecies of the coming kingdom and of the Messiah who would deliver His people Israel, but when he began to preach about something not revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures they would not listen to that. It is the same today. The mystery revealed through Paul, hid from ages and generations past, is still a mystery to most Christians, and it would be to all Christians if not for God's superabounding grace in causing the light to shine upon our darkened souls.

Apollos' ministry at Ephesus being thus curtailed he had a desire to go into Achaia, to Corinth. Perhaps some from Corinth had heard him at Ephesus and invited him, or perhaps Aquila and Priscilla felt he was needed there. At any rate he went, bearing letters of commendation, and was greatly used among the Corinthian saints, for we read, "When he was come (to Corinth) he helped them much which had believed through grace: for he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ" (Acts 18:27- 28). Paul had laid a good foundation and Apollos built thereon. Paul had planted the seed and Apollos watered but it was God that gave the increase.

We come now to a perplexing question. Practically all the expositors tell us that when Apollos came to Corinth his coming inadvertently caused a division among the saints. They surmise that some of the Christians were so impressed with his eloquent preaching that they formed an Apollos party, while others took the position that Paul had planted the church at Corinth and he was their spiritual father and so they formed the Paulist party. If this was so and they were in opposition to one another it is certainly not stated in any of Paul's letters. It is true there were contentions, or quarrels, among the Corinthian saints resulting in divisions, or schisms. Paul had been so informed by the house

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of Chloe. These differences were evidently of recent origin, at the time that Paul was writing, and not something that began five years earlier with Apollos' arrival at Corinth. What was going on in Corinth was what is all too common in the churches today. Many churches have been hurt and hindered and even wrecked because of factions gathered around local leaders who are guilty of envy, pride, and a desire for the spotlight. Each one should examine themselves to make sure there is no taint of this sin in their hearts. These factions at Corinth were not gathered around Paul, Apollos or Peter. These rival groups were headed by some of the leaders right there in the local church, such as Brother Doitmyway or Mrs. UppityUp. In his correction Paul does not use the names of these local leaders who were dividing the saints but he speaks figuratively using his name and that of Apollos to show how foolish it is to be following men instead of all following the Lord. Dr. Harry Ironside has written concerning this very thing:

“Paul said, ‘It hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.’ There was division right in the local assembly of Corinth. Then he uses an illustration to show what he means. ‘Every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ.’ Those were not the actual names that were used. In chapter 4:6 we read, ‘These things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes: that ye might learn in us not to think of man above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.’ Paul is saying, ‘You see, I have simply used this figuratively.’ It was not actually Paul and Apollos, it was men in their own local group, and they were saying, ‘Well, I am for this brother and I am for this other one.’ ... And so Paul put in his own name and that of Apollos and Cephas to illustrate how wrong this was.”

Note again Paul's words in I Corinthians 4:6. "And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes: that ye might learn in us not to think of man above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another." The following is from the Jamison, Fausset and Brown Commentary, in which they sort of paraphrase these words of Paul:

"I have represented under the persons of Apollos and myself what really holds good of all teachers, making us two a figure or type of all the others. I have mentioned us two, whose names have been used as a party cry: but under our names I mean others to be understood, whom I do not name, in order not to shame you."

We do not know how long Apollos stayed at Corinth, nor where he went later, but it would seem evident that he was a powerful force in spreading the message of God's grace and the truth concerning the Body of Christ. We know from the record that he was active over a long period of time. Five years after his visit to Corinth Paul was writing to the Corinthians and Apollos was with him at that time. In his letter Paul states that he wanted Apollos to return to Corinth but Apollos was unwilling to go at that time (I Corinthians 16:12). And then five years after that Paul is writing to Titus and telling him to come to Nicopolis, where he planned to winter, and to bring Apollos with him (Titus 3:13). From all this we may conclude that Apollos and Paul were companions on the trail for a good many years.

In their travels together Apollos and Paul made an ideal team. We have seen how Apollos preached in the synagogues and mightily convinced the Jews, and also preached publicly, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ. He was well suited to have an effective ministry directed to the Jews while Paul's chief aim was toward the Gentiles. A number of scholars believe that Apollos was the author of the Book of Hebrews and

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in that book we have a sample of his preaching to the Jews. Others have said that if he were not the author of Hebrews it would have to be someone just like him.

It is certain that the Apostle Paul greatly appreciated every one of his companions and fellow-workers, all of whom, like him, had the one great desire to reach out with the gospel and to make all see what is the dispensation of the mystery. We have just been told, though, not to get our eyes on men, even though we highly esteem them in love for their work's sake. If we are blessed by looking at Apollos and these other dear saints it is only because we see Christ in them. May we by their example be motivated to live in such fashion that others will see Christ in us.

Aquila and Priscilla

“Who havz for my lifz laid down thzir own nɛzks”

In these studies of Paul and his companions we certainly cannot overlook the lovely husband and wife team of Aquila and Priscilla. Their initial meeting with Paul is described in Acts 18:1-3. “After these things Paul departed from Athens and came to Corinth; and found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla: (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome); and came unto them.”

Paul had just come from Athens where he had disputed with the Greek philosophers and preached to others as he had opportunity. A few are named who did believe but in the main his ministry among these worldly-wise was fruitless. At least there is no record of any church being established at Athens. Paul may have had the Athenians in mind when he wrote: “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. ... Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?” (I Corinthians 1:18,20).

When Paul came to Corinth it appears he was somewhat depressed and discouraged. In I Thessalonians 3:1 he speaks of being alone at Athens, and later he expressed his feelings when coming to Corinth, for he wrote: “And I was with you in weak-

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ness, and in fear, and in much trembling” (I Corinthians 2:3). He was alone and awaiting the arrival of Silas and Timothy. He was greatly in need of human companionship and it was at this time that God brought into his life this dear couple, Aquila and Priscilla, who would be his lifelong friends and helpers. What a comfort it must have been to the apostle when he was brought to their home, and what blessed fellowship as they worked together each day and talked about the things of the Lord.

Priscilla and Aquila were originally from Pontus, a rich province on the shores of the Black Sea. Jews of the dispersion resided there and were addressed in one of Peter’s epistles. Some of them were in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost and were in Peter’s audience. Aquila and Priscilla had but recently been in Rome but were forced to leave Rome when the Jews were expelled from that city by the edict of Claudius Caesar. Perhaps they were on the way back to Pontus and stopped and set up shop in Corinth to replenish their finances. It would appear, however, from some of the references to them, that they were persons of some means. There at Corinth they met Paul, it may have been in the synagogue or in the marketplace. One of the things that brought them together was their common trade, for by their occupation they were tentmakers.

Paul had a trade because all Jewish boys, no matter how wealthy the family, were taught a trade. Of course he was well educated otherwise, probably at the university in Tarsus and then in the rabbinical school in Jerusalem where he studied at the feet of Gamaliel, the great Hebrew scholar. Paul had been taught to be a tentmaker and he often supported himself in the ministry by working at his trade. He reminded the Thessalonians that this was the case when he was in their midst. He wrote, “For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail; for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God” (I Thessalonians 2:9). And again he wrote, “Neither did we eat any man’s bread for nought, but wrought with labour and travail night and

day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you” (II Thessalonians 3:8).

Paul sometimes used the language of a tentmaker. For instance, a verse often quoted is II Timothy 2:15 and one of the lines is “rightly dividing the word of truth.” The Greek “orthotomounto” means “rightly cutting” or “straight cutting” the word of truth. Paul had come from Cilicia, noted for producing goat’s hair cloth used in tentmaking, and when he was at work he had to cut the tent panels straight if they were to make good tents. It is good there are still some of the Lord’s tentmakers today; those who are willing to work with their hands to carry on a ministry for Christ. Some may be inclined to look down on these tentmakers as though they were somehow inferior to so-called fulltime workers. But no, these blessed tentmakers are to be praised. They are not in the ministry simply as a profession but are engaged in it out of a deep conviction, and willing to sacrifice in order to reach others with the Word of truth.

Corinth was the capital of Achaia. It had been destroyed in 146 B.C. but rebuilt by Julius Caesar in 46 B.C. Located on an isthmus, Corinth had two seaports, one facing Europe and the other facing Asia, so it was a city bustling with commerce and a meeting place of East and West. Being a great commercial center it had a large Jewish colony. The estimated population at that time was about 200,000 free men and 500,000 slaves, the same ratio as in most Greek cities. Corinth was noted for its wealth and wickedness, and it was characterized by both luxuriousness and licentiousness. There were 1,000 prostitutes used in connection with the heathen worship at the temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love, or a better name would have been lust. To call one a “Corinthian” meant they were given over to a life of dissipation and debauchery. Little wonder Paul wrote, “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortion-

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ers, shall inherit the kingdom of God” (I Corinthians 6:9-10). Then he could add, “And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (vs. 11). Where sin abounds grace doth much more abound. The church at Corinth was indeed a miracle of grace.

There are six references in the New Testament to Aquila and Priscilla. In half of them Priscilla is named first. It may be she was the more learned of the two and even of a noble family. This husband and wife team were truly laborers together, the two become one, and it is of interest to note that neither one is ever mentioned apart from the other. They were an effective team and demonstrated the power of a united effort, as the Scripture states: “How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight” (Deuteronomy 32:30). Whether the two were believers before meeting Paul is not known. Some feel that if they were brought to Christ through Paul that Luke would have recorded that fact. This, of course, is no conclusive proof as Luke had to write what the Holy Spirit moved him to write. They did, though, learn some wonderful new truth through Paul. We have seen what a blessing Aquila and Priscilla were to the apostle as this matron and her husband took him into their home and gave him their friendship and fellowship. But Paul in turn was a great blessing to them as he unfolded the wondrous truth he had received from the risen Lord Jesus. How thrilled they must have been as they heard of God’s grace manifesto, that He is bypassing Israel and reaching out in grace to all everywhere and offering to save any sinner who will put their trust in His Son. Surely Aquila and Priscilla rejoiced to learn of their position in Christ as God’s dear children, and to know they were no longer under Israel’s law but under grace. They had been a blessing to Paul but they were doubly blessed through him.

Paul’s ministry at Corinth began in the synagogue where he boldly disputed with both Jews and Greeks. With the arrival of Silas and Timothy he was further emboldened. However, when

the Jews opposed and blasphemed he left the synagogue and went next door into the house of a devout Gentile named Justus and there continued his work of preaching Christ. Perhaps Paul was a bit dismayed at this particular time and even thinking of moving on. We know Paul is the pattern saint but he was still a man of like passions as we. On the one hand was Jewish opposition and on the other hand were the Greeks who said the gospel message was moronic. Then too, the immorality and open sin which was evident on every hand, and which was abhorrent to his nature both as a Pharisee and as a Christian, was also a disturbing factor. Elijah of old felt that he alone was left to serve Jehovah, but the Lord reminded him that He still had thousands who had not bowed the knee to Baal. Paul may have felt alone, and the Lord, aware of his need, spoke to him in a night vision, saying: "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; for I have much people in this city" (Acts 18:9-10). It has been said the Lord took a census and saw those whose hearts would be opened and who would respond to the good news of salvation. Paul and his companions, with this word of encouragement from the Lord, continued giving out the Word with renewed zeal. For a year and a half Paul stayed at Corinth and souls were saved, some of whom are named, and a church was established.

When Paul left Corinth and went to Ephesus, Aquila and Priscilla accompanied him and when the apostle continued on to Jerusalem these two remained at Ephesus. We have already seen that shortly thereafter Apollos appeared and Priscilla and Aquila took him under their wing and instructed him more perfectly in the way of God. They had learned some special secret truth from Paul and now they were passing this truth on to others. This ought to be true of all believers. We take in so that we may give out. If we have been taught and blessed by the truth concerning the unsearchable riches of God's grace, then we should not keep it to ourselves but should seek to share it with others. There are many ways in seeking to make the truth known. All are not preachers and able to speak publicly, but all can pray for

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open doors for the gospel and for open hearts to receive it. Many can give in support of those seeking to make known the rightly divided Word, and some can follow the example of Priscilla and Aquila and use their home to reach others.

In the several references to Aquila and Priscilla it is evident that even though their work as tentmakers kept them on the move they always remained in close touch with Paul and were actively serving the Lord in the various places where they sojourned. We have visited them in Corinth and Ephesus, and a bit later when Paul wrote the Roman epistle, we find them back in Rome. Their tentmaking and pilgrim lifestyle reminds us that we believers are strangers and pilgrims on the earth, and with each day's tramping we're nightly camping a day's march nearer home.

Among the many fine attributes possessed by Aquila and Priscilla, and for which they are to be admired, was the gift of hospitality. They met Paul and took him right into their home and were a strength and solace to him. They met Apollos and took him right into their home and shared the truth with him. Then in two places Paul refers to them and mentions "the church that is in their house." This phrase is evidence that wherever they lived these two made their home a shelter for those who named the name of Christ, a place where God's people were ever welcome. It may be as we approach the end of the age and as the darkness deepens that we in America will have to return to these house churches, even as in China and other countries today. This may be a good thing, for it would surely guarantee the church would be less worldly and more spiritual. With their costly structures many churches have become little more than a social club, and most of the time given to activities that have little or no Scriptural warrant. In the home churches the emphasis would be where it belongs; on worship, prayer, praise, and the preaching of the Word.

Priscilla and Aquila, in opening their home to the followers

Aquila and Priscilla

of Christ, opened their home to Christ Himself, for He said: “Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:40). Also, in thus opening their home they showed not only their generosity and hospitality but their heroism as well. Their home became the meeting place of the Christians and this could at any time bring violence or death. That they were true heroes is shown by Paul’s statement when he wrote: “Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus; who have for my life laid down their own necks; unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles” (Romans 16:3-4). This facing of danger on Paul’s behalf likely happened during the riot at Ephesus when the apostle’s life was jeopardized. What a selfless couple were these dear saints of God who faced danger and hazarded their lives on behalf of the Lord’s messenger. How fortunate that Paul should have companions like them. Paul himself gave thanks to God for them as did also all the churches of the Gentiles. And we today give thanks for them and for their Christ-honoring lives, and for their labours and sacrifices which enabled Paul to complete his ministry so that the truth could come down to us in all its purity and power. In the verses quoted above Paul refers to Aquila and Priscilla as “my helpers in Christ Jesus.” What a wonderful friend and companion is a helper. A true helper is one who is willing to take orders and not seek any glory for self, one who can always be depended upon, and one who is ever ready to help whatever the task may be. Paul was blessed by having many such helpers and Aquila and Priscilla were chief among them. Thankfully we have many such among God’s people today, and may the Lord increase their number.

The last reference to our beloved partners is in II Timothy 4:19 where the aged apostle, shortly before his martyrdom, wrote: “Salute Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus.” May our hearts and lives be as dedicated to the Lord as were theirs.

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Titus

“My partner and fellowhelper”

In thinking about the companions of Paul we need to ask just what is meant by the term “companion.” It means more than just being a mere friend. The term “friend” is sometimes used rather loosely. We talk about a person being a friend when they may be no more than an acquaintance. Paul’s companions were indeed his friends but their friendship led to their cooperation with him in his great lifework. This means they took their orders from him and acted upon his advice. We might call them apostolic deputies. The Apostle Paul had the unique ability to use his friends, getting their wholehearted cooperation, without losing their affection and respect. This is one of the marks of a true leader. Certain other qualities are needed in a leader and they were all combined in Paul.

- He knew what he wanted to accomplish and always had a goal in view. He was never indecisive. One cannot expect others to follow if the leader himself does not know where he is going.
- He had a genuine interest in all those associated with him. It may be seen from his writings that he had a paternal love and concern for each one, and was interested in their welfare and sought God’s best for them.
- He never spared himself. He did not send others on hazard-

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ous missions and then sit back in the easy chair himself. He was always ready to do more than he asked or expected of others.

- He had discriminating judgment. He could discern what each one was best suited for and give assignments of which they were capable.

Possessing this remarkable gift of leadership Paul had many loyal and dedicated followers. Such an one was Titus, who was given tasks suited to his personality and which those of lesser temperament could not have performed. Paul had great confidence in Titus and often sent him on missions that could not be entrusted to others. Titus was a native of Antioch and Paul addresses him as “mine own son after the common faith” which would seem to indicate that he was led to Christ through the instrumentality of the apostle. It is of interest to note that even though he was closely associated with Paul we do not find him mentioned in the book of Acts. What we know about him we learn from the apostle’s letters.

Titus comes on the scene in Galatians 2:1,3 where Paul is rehearsing something that happened some time prior. After his first missionary journey Paul had returned to Antioch with Barnabas and settled down there for a “long time” (Acts 14:28) carrying on a successful ministry, especially among the Gentiles, and souls were being saved as Paul preached the gospel of God’s grace. But then “certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1). Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension with these Judaizers but bided their time until Paul had a special revelation. Then he went up to Jerusalem to settle this issue. He met with the Jewish leaders there and outlined the gospel of unadulterated grace which he had received of the Lord and which he preached among the Gentiles. Paul had not gone up to Jerusalem alone but had taken Titus with him. Titus was to be a test case. The

legalists had said that circumcision was necessary in order to be saved. Paul produced Titus as an uncircumcised Gentile who was saved and living for Christ, another indication that he was saved under Paul's grace preaching. In the face of this indisputable evidence the Jewish leaders, those which were of reputation, had little to say. However, false brethren had been brought in to refute Paul but they were no match for him. He said, "To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you" (Galatians 2:5). Paul stood firmly and resisted every effort on the part of these legalists to bring the Gentiles into bondage and rob them of their liberty in Christ. James and Peter and the elders there at Jerusalem were forced to bow to Paul and to issue the decree that the Gentiles were not obligated to keep the Mosaic law and the ordinances associated with it. In spite of this the Judaizers are still on the scene and we should have the courage and boldness of Paul to withstand them. Newell says: "Would that we had grace just as vigorously to defend Paul's great message today."

That which occasioned Paul's letter to the Galatians was doctrine. The Judaizers had come among them and were preaching another gospel, a gospel of works, which was no gospel at all and opposed to the gospel of God's grace. That which elicited the letter to the Corinthians was immorality and misconduct. The letter Paul wrote in response to this was rather sharp in which he used some strong language and rebuked them sternly. After writing he had some anxious thoughts as to how they would receive the letter. Would they suffer the word of exhortation or would they be angry with him for writing it. Finally he sent Titus, his troubleshooter, to learn their response. Then he could scarcely give himself to other matters as he anxiously awaited Titus' return. Note II Corinthians 2:12-13 which describes his feelings at this point: "Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia." He was so concerned about the state of affairs

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at Corinth that he could not take advantage of the open door at Troas. It would seem he was to meet Titus at Troas, with the understanding that if Titus could not be there by a certain time they would meet in Macedonia, so Paul went to Macedonia and there they met. We read: "For when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus" (II Corinthians 7:5-6). How it rejoiced Paul's heart to get the report from Titus that the Corinthians were setting things right in the church and that the brother who had sinned so grievously had repented and been restored to fellowship. The 7th verse of this same chapter attests Paul's joy at the news: "And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more." Verses 13-16 also speak of his joy and that of Titus also at the manner in which the Corinthian saints were responding.

Having received the welcome news and being comforted thereby, Paul sent Titus back to Corinth with the second letter. Also, there was another piece of business to be dealt with. This had to do with the offering they were taking among the Gentile churches on behalf of the Jews at Jerusalem. A famine had taken place in Palestine and many there were suffering. Paul was greatly concerned about this offering. Though God's chosen messenger to the Gentiles he was an Hebrew of the Hebrews with a passionate love for his nation, willing to sacrifice himself on their behalf, as stated in Romans 9:3, "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." It grieved him much that the Jews had rejected God's offer of mercy and had relentlessly persecuted him everywhere, and perhaps he thought this offering would cause them to look upon him more favorably. This collection was of much interest to Paul but was a matter of some embarrassment to the Corinthians.

When the project had been presented to them a year before they had made great promises of cooperation but since, perhaps because of the party spirit and other problems in their midst, they had done nothing. Now Titus is charged with the task of getting them to live up to their pledge. The 8th and 9th chapters of the letter he carried (II Corinthians) has to do with this matter and in 8:23 Paul writes: "Whether any do enquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellow-helper concerning you." That Titus was deputized to handle this shows the confidence placed in him by the apostle. The task required honesty, integrity, firmness and tact, and Titus was the one man suited for the job.

There is now a blank in the biography of Titus. That he was kept busy serving the Lord may be taken for granted, but where he was during the events at Jerusalem and Paul's imprisonment at Rome, we do not know. We must turn to the epistle written to him for any further information. We learn from this epistle that Titus was at Crete, an island in the Mediterranean, mostly mountainous with some peaks rising over 8,000 feet. On Paul's voyage to Rome the ship had sailed along its southern shore. In the period between Paul's two imprisonments he had resumed preaching. He and Titus were at Crete where souls were saved and churches planted. Then Paul went on to other places and left Titus behind to see that these infant churches were on a solid foundation and setting a straight course. We see here again that Titus was Paul's man for a difficult job, for the task here was a formidable one. These Cretans were not the easiest folks to work with. They are described as liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons, and Titus is enjoined to exhort and convince the gainsayers, to stop the mouths of the unruly and vain talkers, to rebuke them sharply, to speak the things which become sound doctrine, etc., etc. What an assignment! These Cretans were notorious for their unchastity and untruthfulness and Titus would be hard put in teaching them how God's children are to live. Apart from the working of God's Holy Spirit the task would be impossible. It is no wonder that Paul's letter to Titus is filled with instructions regarding the walk of the believer.

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The letters to the two pastors, Timothy and Titus, are quite similar and yet there is a marked difference. The main subject in Timothy is correct doctrine, while the subject in Titus is correct behavior. It is of utmost importance that we should be correctly indoctrinated, but then the walk should follow. And here also we need to rightly divide the Scriptures. Many of the taboos given to believers today are faulty because of this failure to rightly divide. We do not get instructions concerning our walk from Moses in the Old Testament, nor even from the gospel accounts when Jesus was here in the flesh as a minister of the circumcision sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. It is in the epistles of the Apostle Paul that we have the truth for members of the Body of Christ in this dispensation of grace, and in those epistles we have the highest standard of conduct to be found anywhere in God's Holy Word. We are saints and we are to walk as becometh saints. We are children of God and we are to live a godly and God-pleasing life. We should be doctrinally correct and then we are told to adorn the doctrine and we do this by living a consecrated, consistent, and Christ-like life.

In the instructions to Titus, and to us, much is said about the believer's walk and works. In Titus 2:11-12 we learn that the same grace that has brought salvation has now become our teacher, and we are to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. We are told to be zealous of good works, to be ready to every good work, and to maintain good works. There is indeed a place for good works, but they are not the root of our salvation but the fruit. The good works do not produce salvation but are the result of the new life in Christ and the inner working of the Holy Spirit. We love and delight in the faithful saying of I Timothy 1:15, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." We should also take heed to the faithful saying of Titus 3:8, "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men."

Under Titus' faithful preaching and teaching it is not too much to expect the Christians at Crete were as swift (or slow) as we to heed the admonitions of the Word and to act accordingly. Saint Titus is still revered at Crete and Andreas Cretensis, a former prelate, says that Titus "laid the foundation of the Church in Crete, was himself there the pillar of the Truth and the strong support of the Faith, the unwearied trumpet of the proclamation of the Gospel, and the clear utterance of the tongue of Saint Paul."

In a closing verse of his letter (Titus 3:12) Paul is about to send Artemis or Tychicus to Crete to relieve Titus. Titus is then instructed to furnish Zenas and Apollos with whatever they might need and to further them on their missionary travel, and then he himself was to come to Nicopolis, where Paul was planning to spend the winter. The last reference to Titus is in II Timothy 4:10, written by Paul shortly before his martyrdom. Here he states that Titus had gone to Dalmatia, which was on the eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea just north of Illyricum, the farthest of Paul's travels (Romans 15:19). Dalmatia was a wild country with a rather tempestuous populace, so here again we see Titus taking on another hard and difficult assignment. He was indeed a most industrious friend who could always be depended upon to do whatever was necessary. Paul had many such friends for he himself was a friend. "A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly; and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother" (Proverbs 18:24).

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Epaphroditus

“My brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier”

As we consider these associates of Paul and learn of their ardent and unselfish service we cannot help but fall in love with them. In our hasty reading of the Scriptures these folk may at times be nothing more than just a mere name. If we take the time, however, for a more careful examination we are certainly impressed by the devout character of these dear children of God. The virtues to be seen in them were also manifest in the life of the Apostle Paul. They had a sincere love for Christ, an untiring zeal, devotion to duty, a deep conviction as to the truth, and faithfulness as stewards of the mysteries of God. There is an old saying that birds of a feather flock together and Paul delighted to be in the company of these friends whose companionship he prized so highly. In lands today, where the Christian life is difficult, God’s people do appreciate the fellowship of their brothers and sisters in Christ and joy to be together. Sadly, this blessing is not valued by many as it ought to be.

Here we are to meet another of these exemplary saints. His name is Epaphroditus. Is he a stranger to you? He ought not to be, for his name is inscribed indelibly on the sacred pages of God’s Word. It is true there is only a scant reference to him, just a few verses in Philippians two and a passing reference in the fourth chapter, yet he was such a man as to merit the most fulsome praise on the part of the apostle. Paul wrote: “Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputa-

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tion.” They were to hold Epaphroditus in high regard and to honor him as one whom God honored. But before we look at Epaphroditus more closely let us get the setting. Paul was in the prison at Rome at the time he wrote to the Philippians. This was his first imprisonment which lasted two years and from the closing verses of Acts it seems this was a house arrest where he had some measure of freedom and his friends were at liberty to visit him. These were not idle nor barren years for in Philippians 1:12 he states that instead of the gospel being hindered by his imprisonment it had been furthered. There is always a way to bear a testimony for Christ. In Paul’s case he had a steady and ever changing audience for there was always a Roman guard present, some think even chained to him, and Paul made a deep impression on these soldiers. They had never had a prisoner like him and there is little doubt that some came to know the Lord through his witness, and not only carried the gospel message back to the barracks where they were quartered but when ordered elsewhere took the truth to other parts of the Empire. Philippians 1:13 reads: “My bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace (Caesar’s court) and in all other places.” It seems strange that the opportunity of spreading the gospel, denied to him in Jerusalem the holy city, was given to him in Rome the heathen capitol.

Paul’s ministry as the prisoner of the Lord was certainly most fruitful. Beside the Roman guards he had many other contacts. There were many Christians in the city and as they came to visit he fortified them with the truth and they were emboldened to go forth and speak the word without fear. In Philippians 4:22 Paul mentions the saints that were of Caesar’s household. Some of these may have held high office, but many of them were slaves and the apostle came in touch with them as they went about their duties. These were encouraged and nourished and took the Word of Life back to others. Most of these Christians had been saved before Paul’s arrival at Rome. The gospel had previously been carried to Rome, not by Peter but by Paul’s converts. Four or five years prior to this Paul had sent the Epis-

tle to the Romans and in it names a number of saints at Rome who had been with him formerly and had been saved and taught by him. Now he had the opportunity to see some of them again. It does seem evident that even though imprisoned he had many avenues by which to disseminate the truth and carry on an active ministry.

God's servant was in bonds, but God's Word was not bound. In Acts 24:27 we read that Felix "left Paul bound" and many are doing the same today. Because they ignore and neglect Paul and his writings they have in reality "left Paul bound." Dean Howson comments that when Paul was bound in prison his writings went forth freely, whereas now when Paul is free and with the Lord, his writings are bound. We quote Dean Howson: "Once, when he was literally a prisoner in Rome, his Epistles went forth freely from thence, to be the possession of the whole Christian people. Now this part of the Word of God is itself 'bound.' Is not this contrast one of the most startling in history?" It is indeed startling, shocking and shameful that this most important part of Scripture is so sadly neglected. Confusion worse confounded has resulted because of this ignoring of the Pauline epistles and the failure to see their application to God's program today in this dispensation of the grace of God. It is most important that one be grounded in Pauline doctrine. There is no doubt that the most important and far-reaching effects of Paul's work during his imprisonment was the writing of the three epistles (Ephesians-Philippians-Colossians) which have brought tremendous blessing to untold millions during the centuries of time.

Now Paul has another visitor. It is dear Epaphroditus and he has come all the way from Philippi. What brought him to Rome? He had been sent by the Philippian church. If Paul had a favorite church it must have been the one at Philippi. He said they were his joy and crown and he dearly loved the saints there and they in turn loved him. When they learned of Paul's imprisonment they had taken up a love offering, but how would they

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get it to him. It would be a long and hazardous journey from Philippi to Rome, about 800 miles, and would take about six weeks over treacherous terrain. In addition the bearer would be carrying a large sum of money and would be in peril of robbers, highwaymen waiting to pounce on the unwary. Whom could they entrust with this dangerous and life-threatening task? Perhaps it was here that Epaphroditus volunteered and said, “Here am I, send me.” This they did and in the providence of God he completed the mission and safely reached the apostle, but in so doing put his own life in jeopardy. The rigorous journey had so weakened him that he was sick nigh unto death. Wuest says: “He and death were next door neighbors.” It is evident his illness was quite lengthy as word of it had reached Philippi and gotten back to him again. He most certainly would have died except for the God who is rich in mercy.

In Philippians 2:25 Paul referred to Epaphroditus as “he that ministered to my wants.” It would appear that after recovering from his illness Epaphroditus stayed with the apostle for some time ministering to him and making himself useful in various ways. In fact, he made himself so invaluable that Paul was loath to part with him, but he could discern that the dear man was pining for his friends at Philippi, and was even grieved that his sickness had caused them anxiety, so he wrote: “Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.” Paul was not one to waste words, yet here he was most profuse in his praise of Epaphroditus, and certainly Epaphroditus was worthy of this high praise. Firstly, Paul calls Epaphroditus “my brother.” What an honor to be considered the brother of the great apostle to the Gentiles. This was something unheard of at that time. The Roman world was divided into slaves and free men, Greeks and Romans, Jews and Gentiles, but no such thing as men bound together in a brotherhood of any kind. It is only among Christians that this term can rightly be used. The term “brother” or “sister” means we have come from the same womb. And we have, “Being born

again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.” In our public services we miss much by our failure to use these terms, for to use them reminds us of our oneness in Christ in the family of God.

Next, Paul said Epaphroditus was his “companion in labour.” Here was a man who was a worker, a co-worker with Paul; they were labourers together. Every Christian should be a worker. We love to quote II Timothy 2:15 but mostly just emphasize the last line about rightly dividing the word of truth. We certainly should be rightly dividing, for if not we will never have a right understanding of the Scriptures, but we should not neglect the first part of the verse. It should be our ambition to be workmen approved of God, and who work so well we need not blush with shame. Epaphroditus did not receive the grace of God in vain, he was always abounding in the work of the Lord and great will be his reward.

Paul had many enemies because of the truth he preached and he had long fought the good fight of faith. He was a battle-scarred warrior and here he calls Epaphroditus his “fellowsoldier.” We are indeed engaged in warfare, not against flesh and blood, but against the unseen powers of darkness controlled by Satan. In our own strength we would fail against this foe, but we are to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. We are to put on the whole armor of God, to fight the beautiful fight of faith, and to courageously and effectively wield the sword of the Spirit. When Paul said Epaphroditus was his fellowsoldier he meant that Epaphroditus was standing shoulder to shoulder with him in the battle. The Roman legions struck fear into the hearts of the enemy as they advanced toward them in an unbroken line, shoulder to shoulder, with shields before them and spears in hand, and shouting a song of victory. If Christians would do likewise it would terrify all the hosts of evil.

Finally, Paul refers to Epaphroditus as the “messenger” of

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the Philippians. He had come to Rome on their behalf, as their representative. He had delivered their message and their love-gift, and now, busy as he was on Paul's behalf, he was longing to be on his homeward way. The apostle wrote: "For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. For indeed he was sick nigh unto death; but God had mercy on him." It is fitting that we stop here and ask the question: Why didn't Paul heal him? In time past Paul had been used in the healing of many. Even handkerchiefs and aprons from his body were taken to the sick and brought about their healing. So why didn't he heal Epaphroditus? Was it because he had lost his faith, as some would tell us? No, the answer is that God's program had changed. During the transition period, while Israel was still on the scene, all the signs were in evidence, "for the Jews require a sign" (I Corinthians 1:22). With the close of the book of Acts, coinciding with Paul's arrival at Rome and his imprisonment, the transition is ended. Here we have the solemn pronouncement: "For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Be it known therefore unto you, THAT THE SALVATION OF GOD IS SENT UNTO THE GENTILES, and that they will hear it" (Acts 28:27-28). Israel is now completely out of the picture and with the setting aside of that nation the sign program ended. In the epistles written thereafter is found the normal program for God's people today and in these epistles there is a complete absence of any reference to the signs. Members of the Body of Christ are to walk by faith and not be looking for outward signs. This is the reason Paul did not heal Epaphroditus, why he left Trophimus sick at Miletum, and why he told Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach's sake.

In the Philippian letter we are told to be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication to make our requests known unto God. There can be no doubt that much

prayer was made on behalf of Epaphroditus and God had mercy and brought about his recovery. It is now time for him to start on his homeward way but Paul did not send him back empty-handed. Whatever the amount of the offering Epaphroditus brought to Paul, when he went back to Philippi he carried a treasure greater by far. It is interesting to notice how Paul used his companions as letter carriers. Phoebe carried the Roman letter, Titus carried one of the Corinthian letters, the slave Onesimus carried the letters to the Colossians and to Philemon, and here Epaphroditus is entrusted with the Philippian letter, an epistle of joy. In this letter Paul tells the Philippian saints to receive Epaphroditus with gladness and to hold him in high reputation, and he tells them why they are to do this: "Because for the work of Christ he was sick nigh unto death, not regarding his life." In Philippians 2:4 we are told not to be mindful of self but of others. Then we have the example of Christ who gave His life for others, and finally the example of this dear man who walked in the steps of the Saviour and who regarded not his own life and was willing to give all for others.

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Timothy

“As a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.”

In getting acquainted with Paul’s fellow-workers, his close companions in the work of the Lord, we certainly cannot omit the one who was perhaps nearer and dearer to him than all others, his own son in the faith, the beloved Timothy. The first mention of him is in Acts 16 where we read: “Then came he (Paul) to Derbe and Lystra; and, behold, a certain disciple was there, Timotheus, the son of a certain woman which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek; which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium.”

On their first missionary journey Paul and Barnabas had come to Derbe and Lystra. There they preached the gospel and were well received, and the people were even ready to worship them as gods after seeing a miracle of healing. But shortly thereafter they were turned against them and stoned Paul, dragging him out of the city for dead. We see here the fickleness of man. It reminds us of those who cried “Hosanna” when Christ rode into the city and a few days later they were crying “Crucify.” Man cannot be depended upon. The Scripture says, “It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man” (Psalm 118:8). It was at this time of Paul’s first visit that Timothy, at a very young age, was converted. He was doubtless impressed by Paul’s message, the glorious gospel of God’s grace, and also by the courage and heroic manner in which Paul stood in defense of

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his message. Timothy may have witnessed the stoning of the apostle. Paul later wrote to him: “But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured; but out of them all the Lord delivered me” (II Timothy 3:10-11).

There seems little doubt that this young man was impressed by the conduct and character of Paul, but he was also influenced greatly by his godly mother and grandmother. Timothy had the blessed privilege of being brought up from infancy under the sound of God’s Word. We read concerning him: “And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (II Timothy 3:15). The Scriptures here referred to were the Old Testament Scriptures. His mother and grandmother were godly women familiar with the Hebrew writings but they also needed to be made wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. In II Timothy 1:5 is written: “When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.” It would seem that on Paul’s first visit to their region these two women, hearing of the crucified and risen Redeemer, put their faith and trust in Him. Then they did not rest until the young boy entrusted to their care had also believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. Fortunate indeed was Timothy to have such a heritage. Parents should be aware of the importance of the early training of their children if they want to see them living for Christ.

In Acts 16 we read of Paul’s return to Derbe and Lystra and in the few years since his first visit young Timothy had shown much growth and potential in his Christian life. He was not a shirker but an active Christian worker and was favorably reported of by all the brethren. Further, voices of prophecy had already indicated that Timothy was destined for special service. In I Timothy 1:18 Paul wrote: “This charge I commit unto thee,

son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare.” At this time the sign gifts were still in evidence and there were those who had these gifts. One of these was the gift of prophecy (I Corinthians 12:10). God used this means to reveal His will to His people, but these gifts have been retired since we now have the completed Word of God to guide and direct us. Brother Stam writes: “The gift of prophecy has since been ‘done away’ but even so it often happens that older brethren will take note of a promising young Christian and say, ‘This is a true man of God. He will be greatly used in the ministry.’” It had also been revealed that Timothy was the recipient of a special spiritual gift (See I Timothy 4:14 and II Timothy 1:6). What was that gift? We might reply the gift was that of teaching and preaching the Word. That is true, but in what sphere? Let us consider the following:

Regarding Timothy’s background we do not read anything about his father except that he was a Greek. It may be noted there was a certain gentleness about Timothy that made him all the more loveable, and this was perhaps due to being reared by his mother. Dean Howson says, “We can trace something of a feminine softness in Timothy, as though his mother’s gentle influence had passed into his mind and disposition.” Writing to the Corinthians Paul said, “Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear; for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do” (I Corinthians 16:10). This would seem to indicate that Timothy was prone to be fearful and intimidated. We refer to Timothy and Titus as pastors but in some ways Timothy was not temperamentally suited, as was Titus, to deal with the problems of a settled ministry. It would seem, therefore, that his special gift was that of an evangelist, and Paul’s last instruction to him was to do the work of an evangelist. It was here on Paul’s second visit to Lystra that he chose Timothy to be his traveling companion, and to the end of his life there was none closer to the apostle than his dearly beloved son Timothy. In six of the epistles Timothy’s name is associated in the

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salutation with that of Paul, showing that Timothy was with the apostle at that time. Also, Paul wrote two personal letters to Timothy. He was certainly an apt choice to be Paul's successor. We have already noted that Timothy was born of mixed parentage, his mother was a Jewess and his father a Greek. In the Old Testament Elijah's mantle fell on Elisha. Here in the New Testament Paul's mantle falls on Timothy, part Jew and part Gentile, a fitting picture of the Pauline truth that Jew and Gentile are one in the Body of Christ.

We read: "Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters; for they knew all that his father was a Greek" (Acts 16:3). Beside his other attributes Paul found in Timothy a kindred spirit. He wrote concerning him, "For I have no man likeminded." He discerned Timothy's earnestness and sincerity, and the absence of any hypocrisy. He could see in this young man a willingness to persevere and never give up. Though timid by nature he would not flee in the face of danger. Timothy had seen firsthand the opposition and persecution faced by Paul and his companions but he was willing to take his place with them.

But what about Timothy's circumcision? It would seem that his mother, though a godly woman and familiar with the Scriptures, was not too strict in observing the Mosaic law. She married a Gentile, which was forbidden by the law, and neglected to have Timothy circumcised, which was commanded by the law. Paul now took care of the latter and had Timothy circumcised. Because of this Paul has been criticized as being inconsistent and guilty of compromising the truth. There is this question to be faced: How could Paul, who had taken such a strong stand at the Council in Jerusalem, and who had shown the inefficacy of the law and had refused to circumcise Titus, now submit Timothy to this rite? If any had insisted that Timothy needed to be circumcised before he could be saved, as was the case with Titus, Paul would not have done it. But this was never suggested.

Paul did this for the sake of expediency. The message was still to the Jew first and in every city Paul began his ministry with the Jews in their synagogue. He had chosen Timothy to be a help in the work and if he was not circumcised he would have been a hindrance rather than a help. There was later a riot at Jerusalem when the Jews thought Paul had brought an uncircumcised Gentile into the temple. Paul was a man of deep conviction and would never knowingly compromise the truth. But Paul was also a practical man, and a man who would use every legitimate means to further the gospel and to reach people for Christ.

If we would rightly divide the Word and fully understand the Scripture we must keep ever before us the fact that during the transition there was a twofold program and the old order was fading out and the new was being ushered in. Some things were done legitimately during the transition which if done later would have been out of order. During this transition Paul baptized some, circumcised Timothy, spoke with tongues more than they all, performed miracles of healing, shaved his head and took a vow, etc., etc. If he did any of these things after the transition he would have been in the wrong and out of the will of the Lord. During this time Paul had a ministry of confirmation to Israel and its purpose was to render that nation without excuse. Paul's arrival at Rome marked the end of the transition and the close of God's dealings with Israel. For two thousand years they had been the God-favored nation, but for the next two thousand years they would be the God-forsaken nation. During this dispensation of grace, while Israel is set aside, God is not dealing with nations but with individuals regardless of race. With the close of Acts we move out of the shadows and into the full-orbed sunlight of God's superabounding grace. We are into a signless and religionless age and we are not to be looking for overt signs nor to be observing fleshly ordinances.

But getting back to Timothy, we read what Paul had to say of this young minister in Philippians 2:20-22. First of all he says, "For I have no man likeminded." This whole chapter is

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informing us that we are to have the mind of Christ: a humble and self-effacing attitude. Timothy was likeminded with Christ, not looking on his own things but on the things of others. Timothy was also likeminded with Paul. In the context Paul is telling the Philippians that his desire was to pay them a visit, but this being impossible at the time he was sending Timothy in his stead, and that Timothy was likeminded with him and had just as deep an interest in their spiritual welfare as did he.

Next, Paul states that Timothy was concerned for others. He writes: “Who will naturally care for your state.” Timothy had the heart of a true shepherd, unmindful of self and solicitous of the welfare of the sheep. Jacob of old did not have much to commend him, but in one respect he was to be praised. He was a good shepherd in the literal sense. He said to his father-in-law, “Thus I was: in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes. Thus have I been twenty years in thy house.” His concern was for the sheep. Timothy was like that, he had a genuine interest and a deep regard for the people of God, the flock over which he had been made overseer.

Further, Paul says that though Timothy had a concern for the saints he had a far greater concern for Christ. He wrote: “For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s.” It is sad but true that with many of us, even in our Christian service, we are prone to seek our own. Not so with Timothy, he put Christ first. It has been said that Christ is present in all believers, He is prominent in some believers, and He is preeminent in a few. Timothy was one of the few in whom Christ was truly preeminent and he could say with the apostle, “For to me to live is Christ.”

Finally, Paul says that Timothy was one who could work harmoniously with others. We read: “But ye know the proof of him, that as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.” So many are independent. They want to serve the Lord,

but it must be their work and all done according to their idea of things. Notice that Paul did not say, “He hath served me in the gospel.” He added a word and said, “He hath served with me in the gospel.” The youthful minister and the aged apostle were laborers together. Here the generation gap was bridged and this is a gap that needs to be bridged in many places today. We need the enthusiasm and vision of the youth, and also the wisdom and knowledge gained by the elders through the years. We are partners in the cause of Christ.

The last letter that came from the inspired pen of the great apostle was addressed to “Timothy, my dearly beloved son.” In this letter Paul is passing the baton on to Timothy. Paul has run the race well and has now finished his allotted course and he is exhorting Timothy to run equally well. He counsels him not to be fearful, nor to be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, and to diligently guard the precious deposit of truth committed to him. The truth he had received from Paul he is to pass on to faithful men, so they in turn can become teachers of others. He is to study to be approved unto God, a workman unashamed and rightly dividing the Word of truth. He is commissioned to preach the Word, and even if men will not receive it and turn away their ears from the truth, he is still to preach it.

The faithful old warrior, now the prisoner of the Lord, requests that when Timothy comes he should bring with him the cloak which had been left at Troas. Winter would soon be coming and the cloak would be needed in the damp prison cell. Dr. Clarence Macartney has written most touchingly concerning this and we quote him herewith:

“The visitor who knocks on the door hard by the church under the brow of the Capitoline Hill at Rome, finds himself admitted into a narrow, dark stairway. Descending that winding stone stairway, he comes at length to the dismal low arched chamber where it is not improbable the great prisoner of Christ lay bound,

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waiting to be offered up. Even on an August day, the visitor will feel the dampness of the dungeon and will not wonder that Paul besought Timothy to fetch the cloak which he had left behind him at Troas. What a cloak the Church of Christ today would weave for her great apostle! But then, that was the only cloak which Paul could hope to have. He had woven it with his own hands. It had been wet with the brine of the Aegean, yellow with the dust of the Egnatian Way, white with the snows of Galatia and Pamphylia, and crimson with the blood of his own wounds.”

All have heard the expression, “Old soldiers never die, they just fade away.” However, this old soldier Paul did not fade away. He stands in the forefront in the battle for truth today, urging on the troops, telling them to be good soldiers of Christ, giving the marching orders, and commanding them as to how they are to fight the beautiful fight of the faith. Sad to say, his voice is not heeded by many in the ranks and it is little wonder there is defeat instead of victory.

The last instruction to Timothy was “Do thy diligence to come before winter.” If Timothy waited too long it would not be possible to travel before spring, and Paul had a premonition that he would not see another spring. We feel confident that Timothy wasted no time; that he immediately started out, stopping at Troas for the cloak, taking ship to Italy and arriving at Rome in time to be with his spiritual father during his closing days on earth. And when the summons came we like to think that Timothy on one side and Luke on the other accompanied Paul to the place of execution and there received his final benediction. There we leave God’s chosen vessel, his great apostle of grace to the Gentiles, and now forever with the Lord he served so faithfully and valiantly.

Our Lord Jesus Christ

“Whose I am, and whom I serve”

It would hardly be proper to conclude these notes about Paul’s companions and helpers without speaking of that One who was the best companion of all, and that was his Lord and Saviour. Some might feel we should have devoted the first chapter to Him rather than the last. This may be true, but He should actually be first, last and all the time. There is a reason, too, for using this last chapter to consider that Blessed Person who is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the Lord which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. We did not want to conclude with any looking at man, no matter how saintly and noble. Our desire is that we should lay this volume down with eyes focused on God’s Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Without Him neither Paul nor any of us would amount to anything. We have His own words: “Without me ye can do nothing.” If we have in any measure been blest by looking at these dear saints of God it is only because we have seen Christ in them.

None of us really labor alone for we are all greatly dependent upon others. Paul had many to aid and assist him, some named in Scripture and many others unnamed, and he did appreciate each one of these fellow-workers. But thankful as he was for his human helpers, he was thankful above all for his Divine Helper, the One who promised to be his constant companion, so that in every time of trouble he would feel the touch of His hand

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and hear Him say, “It is I, be not afraid.” Now when did Paul get to know this Divine Companion? The first glimpse we have of Paul is at the stoning of Stephen, when those who cast the stones laid their garments at the feet of the young man Saul. There he heard Stephen’s message as he recounted Israel’s history and told how that nation had repeatedly rejected God’s message delivered through the prophets, and how they had now rejected the very one of whom the prophets had spoken. Then he saw Stephen looking heavenward and saying, “I see Jesus the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God.” All of this made a deep impression on Paul; the seeds of doubt were implanted in his mind and he had prickings of conscience as to whether he was right. Could this Jesus of Nazareth really be the Messiah? But he perhaps reasoned that the Jewish leaders could not be wrong and went on persecuting the believers, until

There on the Damascus road, with warrants to bring about the arrest of any Christians, Paul himself was arrested by the Heavenly Sheriff. Smitten to the ground he heard the voice from heaven, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” He asked, “Who art thou, Lord?” and received the reply, “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.” At that moment he was convinced. No longer would he stifle his conscience and kick against the pricks. He saw now that he had been in the wrong and cried out, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” From that moment on his fervent desire was to do that which the Lord would have him to do. Here he became acquainted with the One who was to be his constant companion, nearer and dearer to him than all else, and who would be at his side every step of the way. He could honestly sing:

*I’ve a blest companion, ever at my side;
He’s my Lord and Saviour, and He’s my guide.*

This wonderful companion of Paul’s is the same unfailing friend of all who put their trust in Him “so that we may boldly say, the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do

unto me.” Paul was never alone for this blessed companion was ever at his side. When he and Silas were beaten and jailed at Philippi He was right there with them and so filled them with the sense of His divine presence that at midnight they were praying and singing praises unto God. When Paul was stoned at Lystra the Lord was there to catch him up to the third heaven to hear unspeakable words, and he came back to say, “The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” When those at Corinth opposed and blasphemed and his life was threatened, “Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace, for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee.” When he appeared before the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem and they were ready to pull him in pieces “The Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul; for as thou hast testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.” When he stood on the deck of the sinking vessel and it appeared that all of them would be lost, the Lord said, “Fear not, Paul, thou must be brought before Caesar; and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.” In every trying hour Paul had this blessed Companion at his side to give the courage, counsel and comfort that was needed.

We sing a little chorus: “Yesterday, today, forever; Jesus is the same. Friends may fail, but Jesus never; glory to His name.” Men may fail and do fail. In his final letter the apostle wrote: “All they which are in Asia be turned away from me.” This included former friends and helpers, some whom he had led to Christ and others who had been enriched by his ministry. Later in this letter he wrote: “At my first answer no man stood with me, but all forsook me; I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge.” He was referring to his first trial before Caesar, and at a time when he needed them the most these fair weather friends left him. Thankfully, he could go on to say: “Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me.” How blessed to know that Jesus never fails. The Lord Jesus Christ was Paul’s never-failing guide and Paul was His

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faithful follower. Paul is the pattern for all. He wrote: “Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ.” Paul’s whole life was Christ. He could say, “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain (gain for Christ)” and he also stated “I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” His great aim was that Christ should be magnified in his body, whether by life or by death. Paul’s whole message was Christ. He said, “We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord” and then also “We preach Christ crucified Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.” He tells us that we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world and that we are sealed in Christ unto the day of redemption. He states that we have been made the righteousness of God in Christ and are without condemnation in Christ, and that we have been raised up and seated in the heavenlies in Christ and some day will be manifested with Christ in glory. From the moment Paul saw the Saviour on the Damascus road the risen glorified Christ filled all his vision and occupied all his thought.

Paul’s true and best companion and friend was indeed the Lord Jesus Christ, and He is the best companion that any could have. He is the One who promises never to leave nor forsake us, to supply all our needs, to give grace sufficient for every task or trial, and to receive us home to heaven to be forever with Him when life’s journey is ended. Without Him we cannot live and without Him we dare not die. Our heartfelt prayer is that each reader has claimed Him as their own.