

News & Notes

Sunday, August 19, 2007

Remember in Prayer: Daryl Alberson; Steve Alberson; Vikie Cobb; Diane Cox; Melba Cox; Sally Etta Crawford; Gwynn Curtis; Robert Gibson; Charles Johnson; Heather Joyner; Lettie Mae Hunt; Dot Ketchum; Tate King; James Luna; John and Deliah Mann; Carla Miller; Diane Mize; Rob Norman; Shirley Ortiz; Forrest Phelps; Ann Ray; Billy Jean Ray; Judy Robbins; Katherine Shaw; Chris Spence; Jamie Spence; Ron Tega; Calvin Ursery; Nancy Griffin Wamack; Tony Wilburn; Alvie Williford;

Pantry item for the month of August is foil.

We rejoice with **Forrest Phelps** who was baptized this past Sunday as well as with **Cindy Phelps** and **Billy Jean Ray** who were restored.

Ashland events: Today: Singing at Briarcrest Extended care at 4:15 PM; Youth devotional after the evening service at the Northrop's home; Birthday party for Gentry Cox after evening service in the dining hall;

Sermon in Preview:

AM: The Sermon on the Mount

PM: 2Corinthians: Paul Answers His Critics (10)

For the Record (August 19, 2007):

Attendance: 99 Contribution: \$1434.00 Budget: \$1326.00

The Ashland Church of Christ

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Sunday:

Bible Study 9:30 AM

Worship 10:30 AM

Worship 5:00 PM

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 PM

Shepherds:

Barney King

Carrol Street

spreading the Good News Ashland Announcer

"GO THEREFORE AND MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS..." (MATTHEW 28:19)

GREAT POINTS OF CONTRAST IN PAUL'S LIFE

[2 Corinthians 6:8-10]

Roger D. Campbell

When the apostle Paul penned the Book of 2 Corinthians, Timothy was with him (1:1). At the close of the 5th chapter, Paul speaks of "*the ministry of reconciliation*" (5:18), and as the 6th chapter opens, we read of him making reference to "*ourselves as the ministers of God*" (6:4). Whether he refers in these two instances to himself and Timothy, or to himself and all the other apostles, is an interesting matter. But, whichever of these proposals is correct does not really affect the message of the text which follows, and that is the text which we want to consider.

The truth is, in the verses below, we could see how each of these items, in principal, could apply to any of Jesus' followers. Paul writes of the suffering that he and others endured (6:4,5), then he lists a number of blessings and matters that characterized their service to the Lord (6:6-8a). Next, he mentions seven items of contrast. Let's first read them, then briefly look at each one:

". . . as deceivers, and yet true; As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things" (2 Corinthians 8b-10).

"As deceivers, and yet true" – Closely follow the journeys of Paul that are recorded in the Book of Acts and you will see the gospel message that he preached causing a stir. Ephesus was one city in which people spoke out against him and the gospel. In particular, it was the makers of idols that tried to portray Paul and those with him as deceivers (Acts 19:23-28). When you and I teach the gospel today, some may count it as deception, and look at us as deceivers, but that message "*is in truth, the word of God*" (1 Thessalonians 2:13). It is not pleasant to be labeled as a "deceiver" or "heretic," but if we present the truth and support it with

holy lives, then let us not back off from our commitment to God when others begin their name calling. Some of the Jewish leaders referred to Jesus as "that deceiver" (Matthew 27:63), but they were the ones who were twisting the truth, not Jesus.

"As unknown, and yet well known" – For a while, at least, the apostles of Jesus would not have been well known inside Caesar's court or to the upper crust of society. To those outside the church, those men, as well as their brothers and sisters in the Lord, may have been little known. In the church, however, the apostles were known far and wide. Other brethren may have been unknown outside of their own area or local church, but they were faithful servants that were loved and appreciated by those saints that knew them. Being well known or unknown has no bearing on the kind of character we possess, and does not determine whether or not we are faithful to the Master. Some saints (preachers, in particular) may become obsessed with "making a name" for themselves, but their childish, worldly efforts to gain fame do not draw them closer to the God of heaven. I had rather go through life being faithful to God and unknown to most of the world than being known by all but unfaithful to Him. What about you?

"As dying, and, behold, we live" – Paul and those of like precious faith had suffered immensely (6:4,5). Yet, he was still able to write this epistle, so he was not dead yet. He and others, like each of us, with each passing day and each breath taken, were moving closer to the grave. The physical body is not made to live forever. It wears out. It runs down. And, yet, as long as we are alive, we can be useful in the Kingdom by the example that we set and deeds we do. Let us not be satisfied to "just hang on." Rather, let us live an abundant life in the Lord (John 10:10), keep bearing the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23), and keep growing in the Christian graces (2 Peter 1:5-7). A good brother recently told me, "Every day is a good day; some days are just better than others." We need to thank God for each day of life, and thank Him that we have the privilege to live *with* Him and *for* Him.

"As chastened, and not killed" – Paul endured great hardship for the Cause of the Master (2 Corinthians 11:23-27). But to this point in his life, the Lord had delivered him from the hands of death. In this same epistle, Paul wrote of what he and others had earlier encountered in Asia: "*But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead. Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet*

deliver us" (1:9,10). Paul understood that if the time should come that men would choose to take his life, that is all they could take – his life, but not his soul and its eternal well being (Matthew 10:28).

"As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing" – It grieved Paul to see people reject the gospel, especially his fellow Jews (Romans 9:1-3). It also caused him great sorrow to watch members of the body of the Christ forsake the Lord (Acts 20:29-31). Yet, despite the disheartening things that he observed, he rejoiced. Why? Because he knew that his name was written in the book of life (Philippians 4:3,4). Being a person of joy is a matter of choice. We can be bitter and bummed out about everything in life, or we can accept the reality of unpleasantness and be happy in Jesus. The choice is ours.

"As poor, yet making many rich" – From a material standpoint, Paul was not wealthy. But, like all other Christians, he enjoyed all spiritually blessings in the Christ (Ephesians 1:3). In addition, his work in teaching the gospel made others spiritually rich. The saints in Smyrna were in a state of financial poverty, yet they were rich in the Lord (Revelation 2:9).

"As having nothing, and yet possessing all things" – From the vantage point of society's rich and mighty, Paul *was* a nothing, and in a material sense, *had* nothing. However, he possessed all that he needed. He later wrote, ". . . *for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content"* (Philippians 4:11). Because he put the Christ first in his life, Paul's every material need was met (Matthew 6:33). And, at the same time, he had all the spiritual guidance and blessings that that his life and soul needed (2 Peter 1:3).

The apostle Paul was a faithful servant of the Lord. But, surely we all can see that his faithfulness was not due to an easy, problem-free life. Quite the contrary! From a human standpoint, Paul endured much. Through it all, he hung in there. He did not retreat. He did not become a negative, pessimistic, self-pitying person. He certainly did not grow weary in well doing and throw in the towel.

Paul had a good perspective on life as it really is. He made a plain distinction between what is important to the world and what is important to the Lord. He had a clear mind about things material and temporal, in contrast with those that are spiritual and eternal. Through all that he experienced, endured, and observed, Paul kept a positive attitude. You and I can learn much from him and his steadfastness.