

/// I should Have Sorrow upon Sorrow

Philippians 2:25 – 3:1

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~ Our Spiritual Safari has been examining the pattern for Christian living in chapter two of the epistle to the Philippians. If you haven't read our previous four reports, I highly suggest you go back and read all of them now as a prerequisite to this and the next several upcoming reports. We live the "*Christian life*" not by imitation, but by impartation of the mind of Christ; as we have seen in this chapter. We must permit the Holy Spirit to produce spiritual fruit in our lives. Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance are all fruit, but they are also the characteristics of the Lord Jesus Christ. Obviously, Christ humbled Himself in a way we can't understand when He came to this earth from Heavens glory to die on the cross for our sins.

The mind of God is to exalt Christ. That's what God the Father does. As believers, our mind is directed to exalt Him. We act voluntarily on that instruction; or we refuse to obey — voluntarily. John said, "*.... I must decrease so that Christ might increase.*" John decreased voluntarily for the cause of Christ. Now, if that's not happening in your life, then, may I say this kindly? – You're not living for God, and you are not living a so-called Christian life, either. I don't care who you are; you may be a preacher, or a Sunday school teacher, or a deacon in the biggest church in town, there are a whole lot of organizations today that need to have Christ increase as they decrease. Are you one of them? If we saw a little less theatrics and less overly-dressed flashiness in the church, then revival might follow....

II

25 Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellow soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.

26 For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick.

27 For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

28 I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.

29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation:

30 Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.

~ When the devil attacks, he never attacks the Word of God directly. The attack is always personal; directed at the man who insists sound doctrine be taught properly, correctly and completely. That's why I never get involved in apologetics; the Bible doesn't need me defending it. The Spirit of God handles the Sword of God through me. Man can do nothing against the truth, friends. Sometimes, the enemy just hammers away relentlessly on us as we try to sow the seed of the Word of God. That's when it is prudent to pray, "*deliver us from the evil one.*"

Well, Paul is all alone in prison now with a thorn in the flesh that God would not remove. Timothy had stomach troubles and Epaphroditus was not well, either. Everyone around Paul is sick. Paul, being an apostle, and being a faith-healer, mysteriously wasn't running around healing anyone, though. They made it a matter of prayer — and God heard and answered their prayers. The emphasis is beginning to move away from apostolic works and back toward the Great Physician now. In order for Christ to increase — I must decrease. So must you.

If you are trying to succeed as a faith-healer, then you are trying to be like God. That means you are trying to be someone you're not. If you take the credit for facilitating a healing, then you have stolen God's glory. The emphasis must be squarely upon the Word of God that reveals the Lord Jesus Christ — never upon us or anything we do in the world — or it cannot

be called a work for the Lord. If you call something a work for the Lord, you better make sure it involves the teaching of the Word of God or, guess what? – It isn't for Him; and it will not be used by the Lord. It's going in the fire; and — the end. That's what a ministry means. I understand it's dogmatic – but that's what's real, friends.

People are breaking off into groups where they can discuss this problem and that problem and some other problem in Christian circles. Debating atheists gets a believer exactly nowhere. Those forums are jam-packed with people who only want to “*disprove*” the Bible as the Word of God. The detour is re-routing many people to follow a thousand uncertain paths. What we need is a moving of the Spirit of God upon the Word of God! The Word of God reveals the Lord Jesus Christ! If we did not have a Bible, none of us would know anything about Christ Jesus – period. I insist an emphasis on Bible study be the number one priority in our lives; and that it be bore down on relentlessly – because, you see, friends, we claim to believe — but we all have some unbelief. For some of us, our unbelief is so much bigger than our belief. I have to ask God to help me rest upon Christ in that regard. Maybe you don't have that problem. I do.

When I consider this Spiritual Safari, I don't see how God could use it for anything. I believe everything I write wholeheartedly; but I still experience that nagging root of unbelief. Let's just keep this real, friends: none of us trust God as we should. When God tells me to love Him with all my heart, I fail Him. I wish I could love Him more. I desire to love Him more. When God tells me to love Him with all my mind, I fail Him - because I wish I could think about Him more often. I desire the Word of God be brought to my remembrance in every sentence. When God tells me to love Him with all my soul, I fail Him - because I look inward, and discover I'm as empty as outer space without God giving me my plan and purpose. We all have a very serious problem, friends.

Man is attempting to solve his mental problems with drug-induced psychologies, and all manner of self-help gimmickry, gadgetry, and other broken crutches today. We have a pandemic of mental health issues in this world – make no mistake about that. If you have ever read the accounts of the Roman Empire of Caesar Augustus, as his men moved out, and took

over the then-known world, Roman law became supreme in every land; little mercy was shown to criminals. The government was thoroughly corrupt – and drunkenness perpetuated myriad social epidemics and illnesses. Homosexual perversion was normal at that time. Well, those are the same problems we have today, or course – and the problem can only be solved when and if we get back to the Word of God. There is simply *no other way* to help this lost and dying world.

Mankind does not have the answers to mankind's problems, friends. If education were the answer, then we wouldn't have any problems. University churns out doctorates by the auditorium-full every day. Each new scientific discovery merely compounds the myriad problems we already have. Technology isn't making life simpler and easier; it's making it more difficult and complicated. Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditus were involved in the work of Christ together in the midst of a debauched and literally unhinged Roman culture. They were preaching a crucified Christ Who was raised from the dead; Who provides mercy for all who will trust Him. And multitudes turned to God at that time....

III

1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.

~ So, our Spiritual Safari ends this leg of our expedition through the entire Word of God together in the mind of Christ. Let's stop making excuses for Bible ignorance, and truly get educated so we can draw closer to Jesus; and then we can reach more people with a saving knowledge of Him. As we move along and consider chapter three, we are going to see this is what leads to the prize for Christian living. Paul believed that Christ was going to establish His Kingdom here on earth. That was the prize Paul had in mind, and it never changed. However, there was always great hope for the Lord Jesus to take His own out of the world, too. That's when Paul discovered he was in "*quite a straight.*" We're heading for some remarkable literary passages in this safari. I hope you will come with us ~

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