

GOD'S CALLING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Lesson Twenty-One

IN THE EPISTLES: Epaphroditus

Burden to Impart:

The Lord's servants need the consoling fellowship and material supply of the brothers and the churches in order to carry on their service and warfare. This cause is worth risking our lives for.

Memory Verse: "...For the work of Christ he drew near even unto death, risking his life, that he might fill up your lack of service toward me" (Philippians 2:30).

Facts to Teach:

1. The Lord called the Apostle Paul and commissioned him with an enormous task: the apostleship of the nations (Gal. 2:8). This required him to be daring and bold. He went from country to country telling the people about the Lord Jesus and His salvation. Some people hated and persecuted Paul, while others left everything to accompany and support him in the carrying out of his burden. Paul could not do it all on his own.
2. Wherever Paul went he could boast that he never asked the newly saved ones or the churches for money for his personal needs. He boasted that in preaching the gospel he made it without charge (1 Cor. 9:18). He left his daily needs for money and food up to the Lord and devoted all of his life and energy to the preaching of the gospel and care of the churches. However, when it was necessary, Paul would use his skill as a tentmaker to supply his needs and the needs of those with him (Acts 20:33-34).
3. The Lord's servants should be taken care of by the saints whom they have enriched with the Word of God (1 Cor. 9:3-11). However, sometimes the saints are negligent or forgetful of their spiritual responsibilities before God and do not send His servants any supply. This is what happened to Paul when he was in prison. He could not make tents there, and he was in need.
4. The church in Philippi remembered Paul's need and sent a trustworthy brother, Epaphroditus, to bring their gift to him in the prison. Paul considered this gift as a sweet, well-pleasing sacrifice to God. And Epaphroditus was like a priest who brought this timely offering and presented it to God by giving it to Paul.
5. Epaphroditus risked his life in order to bring the gift to Paul. He became very sick and nearly died for the work of Christ, that he might make up for the lack of the saints' service to Paul. The only reason he lived was because God had mercy on him, and on Paul also, so that he would not have sorrow upon sorrow.
6. Epaphroditus was a comforting brother to Paul while he was in prison. He was also a fellow-worker, and a fellow-soldier, for he was not just working for the Lord, he was fighting against Satan at the risk of his life to help meet the servant of the Lord's need. Paul said such a person should be held in honor by all.