

Milk & Honey

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Spiritual Food and Encouragement for Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ

The Hope of the Lord's Return-How Real Is it?

Norman Roberts

Evangelical, Bible-believing Christians believe the Lord Jesus is coming back to earth some day. When He was here the first time, as He left to return to heaven, He said, "I will come again" (John 14:3). But two thousand years have passed and still He has not come. To Him, to whom a thousand years is as one day and a day as a thousand years, it is as if He were here the day before yesterday. But to us earthlings, with our allotted three score years and ten, and at most, a few more years if granted by the Lord, two thousand years is a long, long time.

We know better than to pay attention to those theological exhibitionists who claim to know the very day of His return. He Himself said, "But of that day and hour no one knows, no, not even the angels in heaven, but My Father only" (Matthew 24:36). So in that divine realm of interaction between the Persons of the Godhead, there are some things known only to the Father, and the time of the Son's return is one of them.

So as time goes on, we tend to become completely absorbed in our ordinary business, even in the work we do for the Lord. And the hope of His return becomes more and more remote. Not that we ever completely put it out of our mind, but to be honest, it would take most of us by complete surprise if He were suddenly to appear in our midst.

Now in closing another year, let's ask ourselves some searching questions. If I were really convinced of the imminence of the Lord's return, would I spend my money as I have been? How about my time? The Lord knows my need for rest and recreation, but would the eagerness I have to enjoy my pleasurable pursuits be quite as keen if I really expected the Lord to return today?

Of course, there is a need for balance. The Lord said, "Occupy until I come." So He doesn't expect us to climb a mountain somewhere and sit, waiting for His return. We need to be occupied with His business, living godly and fruitful lives, all the while waiting expectantly for His promised return.

In one of His discourses, recorded in Matthew 24, the Lord envisioned a man going away and leaving his estate in the care of his servants. It was a test of their faithfulness. When

their lord would return or how secure the property would be in his absence they did not know. Their only instruction was to watch. The faithful and wise servant would obey and care for his master's goods responsibly. The evil servant would say, "My master is delaying his coming" (verse:48), proceed to act shamefully toward his fellow servants, and indulge himself with the drunkards.

Solemn warning for us, as we await our Lord's return. We are not likely to harm our brothers and sisters in Christ intentionally or be overcome with strong drink. But there are more subtle influences that can interfere with our fellowship with the Lord and draw us away from the close and intimate fellowship we should be enjoying with His people. How about the internet, for example? For most of us the computer has become an indispensable tool for everyday living.

But with it has come an enormous potential for corrupting our minds and damaging our consciences. As we sit alone before our computer, we don't even have to search for questionable material; it intrudes on us and screams for our attention. It is just here that the consciousness of our Lord's imminent return, and the joys it will bring of being with Him for all eternity, should make us ashamed of our infatuation with the tawdry images that may pop up on our computer screen. If these things have engaged our attention, let us fall on our knees in repentance before the Lord and receive the forgiveness He so freely offers.

Less boldly intrusive than the blandishments of the internet are the images that appear on our television screen. Though they may indeed be less offensive they are not without their potential to dull our spiritual sensitivities. One has discovered in Psalm 119:37 what he calls the Christian's TV: "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity."

As we await our blessed Lord's return, may we be delivered from these passing detractions, be they evil and soul-damaging, or simply frivolous and time-wasting.

Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown" (Rev. 3:11). *

Written 12/2010. Brother Roberts is now with the Lord.

STW Spring Conference

April 11, 2015

North York Gospel Chapel

10AM - 3PM, Lunch served

Continued from page 2 — Epaphroditus

orders. No, nor of railway traveling. It was no easy matter to get from Philippi to Rome in those days. But Epaphroditus, that dear, unpretending, self-surrendering servant of Christ, presented himself to supply the missing link, to do the very thing that was needed and nothing more; to be the channel of communication between the assembly at Philippi and the apostle at Rome. Deep and real as was the apostle's need, precious and seasonable as was the Philippians' gift, yet an instrument was needed to bring them both together, and Epaphroditus offered himself for the work. There was a manifest need and he filled it. He did not aim at doing some great showy thing, something which would make him very prominent and cause his name to be blazed abroad as some wonderful person. Ah! no, Epaphroditus was not one of the pushing, self-confident, extensive class. He was a dear, self-hiding, lowly servant of Christ, one of that class of workmen to whom we are irresistibly attracted. Nothing is more charming than an unpretending, retiring man who is content just to fill the empty niche; to render the needed service, whatever it is; to do the work cut out for him by the Master's hand.

There are some who are not content unless they are at the head and tail of everything. They seem to think that no work can be rightly done unless they have a hand in it. They are not satisfied to supply a missing link. How repulsive are all such! How we retire from them! Self-confident, self-sufficient, ever pushing themselves into prominence. They have never measured themselves in the presence of God, never been broken down before Him, never taken their true place of self-abasement.

Epaphroditus was not of this class at all. He put his life in his hand to serve other people; and when at death's door, instead of being occupied with himself or his ailments, he was thinking of others. "He longed after you all and was full of heaviness" — not because he was sick, but — "because ye had heard that he had been sick." Here was true love. He knew what his beloved brethren at Philippi would be feeling when informed of his serious illness, an illness brought on by his willing-hearted service to them.

All this is morally lovely. It does the heart good to contemplate this exquisite picture. Epaphroditus had evidently studied in the school of Christ. He had sat at the Master's feet and drunk deeply into His spirit. In no other way could he have learned such holy lessons of self-surrender and thoughtful love for others. The world knows nothing of such things; nature cannot teach such lessons. They are altogether heavenly, spiritual, divine. Would that we knew more of them! They are rare among us with all our high profession. There is a most humiliating amount of selfishness in all of us, and it looks so hideous in connection with the

name of Jesus. It might agree well enough with Judaism, but its inconsistency with Christianity is terribly glaring.

Notice the very touching manner in which the inspired apostle commends Epaphroditus to the assembly at Philippi. It seems as if he could not make enough of him, to speak after the manner of men. "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, and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow." How deeply affecting! What a tide of divine affection and sympathy rolled in upon that unpretending, self-sacrificing servant of Christ! The whole assembly at Philippi, the blessed apostle and above all, God Himself all engaged in thinking about a man who did not think about himself. Had Epaphroditus been a self-seeker, had he been occupied about himself or his interests, or even his work, his name would never have shone on the page of inspiration. But no; he thought of others, not of himself. Therefore God and His apostle and His Church thought of him.

Thus it will ever be. A man who thinks much of himself saves others the trouble of thinking about him. But the lowly, the humble, the modest, the unpretending, the retiring, the self-emptied, who think of and live for others, who walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, these are the persons to be thought of and cared for, loved and honored, as they ever will be by God and His people.

"I sent him therefore the more carefully," says the beloved apostle, "that when ye see him again ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation. Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me" (Phil. 2:28-30).

Thus it was with this most dear and honored servant of Christ. He did not regard his life, but laid it at his Master's feet, just to supply the missing link between the church of God at Philippi and the suffering and needy apostle at Rome. Therefore, the apostle calls upon the Church to hold him in reputation, and the honored name of Epaphroditus has been handed down to us by the pen of inspiration, and his precious service has been recorded and the record of it read by untold millions, while the names and the doings of the self-seekers, the self-important, the pretentious of every age and every clime and every condition are sunk — and deservedly so — in eternal oblivion. *

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For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; Romans 12:3

The Need To Die

William MacDonald

Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

John 12:24

Seed never produces grain until first it falls into the ground and dies. The Lord Jesus here referred to Himself as a grain (or kernel) of wheat. If He did not die, He would abide alone. He would enjoy the glories of heaven by Himself; there would be no saved sinners there to share His glory. But if He died He would provide a way of salvation by which many might be saved. The same applies to us, as T. G. Raglan says, "If we refuse to be corns of wheat falling into the ground and dying; if we will neither sacrifice prospects, nor risk character, and property, and health; nor, when we are called, relinquish home and break family ties for Christ's sake; then we shall abide alone. But if we wish to be fruitful, we must follow our Blessed Lord Himself, by becoming a corn of wheat, and dying, then we shall bring forth much fruit." Many people think that the important things in life are food, clothing, and pleasure. They live for these things. But in thus loving their lives, they fail to realize that the soul is more important than the body. *

STW Spring Conference

April 11, 2015

David Dunlap, Tom Irwin
North York Gospel Chapel

Mark your calendar
10AM - 3PM, Lunch served

York Bible Study Program

February – April 2015

Date	Topic	Teacher
March 14	Revelation 1–3	Mike Attwood
April 11	Conference	See information above
May 9	Perseverance (2) & Discernment (2)	John Gordon

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Spread The Word's web site allows you to find back issues of *Milk & Honey*, as well as lists of the teaching and Gospel literature which is available, most of which is free of charge. The site will also provides the schedule for the York Bible study and other conferences, and information on how to send funds to STW for distribution to commended workers. *

Thank You!

We were encouraged by the Lord in 2014. Many encouraging and helpful gifts were given to STW and commended workers. There was over \$95,000 distributed to commended workers and assembly related ministries in North America. It has also been the practice of STW to minister from our general fund to assembly camps and ministries when possible. Over the course of the year STW was able to ministered to a few camps and ministries which are involved in the distribution of the Gospel. We want to thank each one who financially supported Spread The Word in 2014. Your gifts have enabled us to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to provide spiritual food for the Lord's people around the world.

In addition to the approximately 72,000 copies of *Milk & Honey* which were sent to a number of different countries, there were many thousands of Gospel tracts, and teaching booklets distributed free-of charge. Your gifts have also supported the STW conference in July, the 26th year of the York Bible Study Program, and the 10th Shepherding Conference held at Greenwood Hills (**next conference 9/17-19/2015**).

We also hold emergency funds for unforeseen needs; such as, equipment and/or software replacement, assemblies and camps suffering damage due to storms, flooding, etc. *

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Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. Phil. 2:5

March 2015

Epaphroditus

C. H. Mackintosh

We want the reader to turn with us to Philippians 2 and study the brief sketch of the interesting character of Epaphroditus. There is great moral beauty in it. We are not told very much about him, but in what we are told, we see a great deal of what is truly lovely and pleasant — much that makes us long for men of the same stamp in this our day. We cannot do better than quote the inspired record concerning him; and may the blessed Spirit apply it to our hearts and lead us to cultivate the same lovely grace which shone so brightly in that dear and honored servant of Christ!

“I supposed it necessary,” says the blessed apostle, “to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and companion in labor, and fellow-soldier, but your messenger and he that ministered to my wants. 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, and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. I sent him therefore the more carefully, that when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation, because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me” (Phil. 2:25-30).

Now it is quite possible that some of us, on reading the above, may feel disposed to inquire if Epaphroditus was a great evangelist or teacher or some highly gifted servant of Christ, seeing the inspired apostle bestows upon him so many high and honorable titles, styling him his “brother and companion in labor, and fellow-soldier.”

Well, we are not told that he was a great preacher or a great traveler or a profound teacher in the Church of God. All we are told about him in the above touching narrative is that he came forward in a time of real need to supply a missing link, to “fill a gap,” as we say. The beloved Philippians had it upon their hearts to send help to the revered and aged apostle Paul in his prison at Rome. He was in need and they longed to supply his need. They loved him, and God had laid it upon their loving hearts to communicate with his necessities. They thought of him, though he was far away from them, and they longed to minister to him of their substance.

How lovely was this! How pleasing to the heart of Christ! Harken to the glowing terms in which the dear old prisoner speaks of their precious ministry. “But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.... Notwithstanding, ye have well done that ye did communicate with my affliction. 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. Not because I desire a gift, but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all, and abound; I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God” (Phil. 4:10, 14-18).

Here we see the place which Epaphroditus filled in this blessed business. There lay the beloved apostle in his prison at Rome, and there lay the loving offering of the saints at Philippi. But how was it to be conveyed to him? These were not the days of banks checks and post-office money

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