

When Living Means Christ: Love for All the Saints - Philippians 4:20-23

When you come to the end of most New Testament letters, you realize just that... they were actual letters! Personal letters. From a person to persons. I used to wonder why all the names (of people we hardly ever know anything about) were at the end of so many epistles until it occurred to me - these were not doctrinal treatises, lists of behavioral codes, or study manuals - they were very personal letters!

Christianity is nothing if not personal. The Gospel is from a Person through a Person to persons. Its very mission is tied to the way we personally care for one another (Jo 13:35). Three times in these verses alone Paul speaks of greeting one another - salute, pay your respects, acknowledge, welcome with affection. (You get the impression that if you want to fulfill verse 20 one of the best ways to do so is to love His children.)

When living means Christ, we have love for "all the saints." (v 21-22) We are in a covenant family together with all who share in the Life of Christ. God has determined we'll not grow up - be formed into the likeness of Christ, lose self interest as our basis for reality - apart from sharing His Life with others... the others He picks! (I Cor 12:18) It takes nothing less than verse 23 to pull off verses 21-22. There is no church-less Christ and, therefore, no church-less Christ-likeness. We cannot separate practicing the presence of God from practicing the presence of people.

When we lovingly greet and receive others, we give them a place to "be". We intentionally see to it that no one is overlooked. We each need to know we are loved and accepted, and Ro 15:7 is personalized and concretized as we accept others as he has accepted us. In doing so, we contribute to a safe place for people to bring their humanity. And we all know when we risk being honest and real, good things, "grace" things happen!

When living means Christ we also seek to call the best out of others. When Paul calls them "saint(s)", he is speaking to the new man, not just fussing at the old man. He is not overlooking or tolerating un-Christ-likeness. He is merely going to the deeper place in others where truth resides and may be awakened and called forth. Such encouragement of one another (Heb 10:23-25) contributes to a culture of transformation as we draw attention to the strength and virtue graced to us in Christ.

Implied in such a gracious receptivity of "all" and "every" saint is the celebration of diversity. Paul's admonition excludes preferential greetings and selective acceptance based on our likes and dislikes. We are to honor one another (Ro 12:10) as uniquely created, custom made expressions of God's life. Each is irreplaceable!



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GREETINGS

As you can see from our schedule, 2015 finds us in every quadrant of the country, sharing the liberating message of "Christ in you the hope of glory." Every time I come to the end of one calendar year and look into the next, I wonder, "How long can this continue? Will there be enough (any?) places to go next year to bear witness to God's truth?" And so far, the answer has been "Yes" and 2015 confirms it once again. There are a few possible spots to squeeze in a meeting or two if you are interested, so let us know soon!

2014 was a good year for OIC. Although I'm still working my 8 week setback due to health issues into the Ro 8:28 kind of "good", the truth remains. Through your encouragement, prayers, and personal support God seemed to bless through our conferences, counseling, and CCF ministry. None of it would be happening apart from your participation with us. When Paul said, "God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus..." it is so obvious to us that you are some of His "riches"!

We thank God for your joining in the journey with us as we continue to seek to enlarge the awareness of what it means for Christ to be our Life. As Paul said, more often than not, the "unseen" parts are the most important.

Have a blessed and fulfilling New Year!
Steve

CALENDAR

JANUARY

4,25 CCF
6 Alachua Study
27 Ocala Study

FEBRUARY

13-15 Florida Retreat

27 - MARCH 1

20-22 San Antonio, TX (210-473-0618)
Titusville, FL (772-563-0430)

APRIL

17-19 Monticello, UT (859-393-4104)

MAY

1-3 Dalton, PA (607-239-5006)

ALACHUA, FLORIDA WINTER RETREAT

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\$280 couple (all inclusive)
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Includes: lodging,
conference fee
& 5 meals

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\$65 person conference fee & 3 meals

(no lodging
or breakfast)

Or

\$20 person conference fee

RESERVATIONS:

\$50 per person DUE BY JANUARY 30th

No reservation fee necessary to attend meetings only

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