

EVANGELISTIC EMPHASIS: BEING ACTIVE IN SHARING OUR FAITH

READING: I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, because I **hear** about your **faith** in the **Lord Jesus** and your **love** for all **the saints**. I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ. Your **love** has given me great joy and encouragement, because **you, brother**, have refreshed the hearts of the **saints**-Philemon 4-7

INTRO: Sometimes it is so much easier to pray than others. It is difficult to pray in faith for what seems to us as impossible. But when we see something that excites us encourages us we love to thank God. That is what we hear in this reading- a man who knew another man well and has heard all good things about him says, *"I thank God for you all the time."* It is easy for Paul to do that for his friend Philemon because all is good and he can be so thankful for him and his work.

This morning there will be an Evangelistic Emphasis but one that is found in the midst of words that need clarification.

I) PAUL PRAYS BECAUSE OF WHAT HE HAS HEARD

A) *Philemon Is A Man Of Faith In Jesus*

- 1) This involves believing that Jesus is the Saviour.
- 2) It would include that He was Immanuel, not a fake
- 3) The focal point is that he is the only way back to God for sinners.
 - (a) This means finding it in the Bible
 - (b) It also means trusting Jesus in this present time.
- 4) *Each one of us must have faith in Jesus or we do not belong to Him.*

B) *He Is One Who Loves Fellow Saints*

- 1) A **saint** is a person who is different from the world. Not better than other Christians.
 - (a) A saint is holy person, who follows Jesus
 - (b) The Christians at Corinth were known as *"saints"* I Cor. 1:2
- 2) **Agape love** means wanting the best for others.
 - (a) This brings us to the vertical/horizontal relationship twosome.
 - (b) That reminds us of what Jesus said were the greatest commandments-Matt. 22:34
- 3) *We must have faith in Jesus and we must love our fellow saints.*

II) PAUL IS THANKFUL FOR THE PLEASANT RESULTS HE HAS RECEIVED

A) What He Was Hearing About Philemon, Brought Paul

- 1) **Joy and Encouragement**
 - (a) It was Philemon's love that gave Paul these good things
 - (b) *Do you live to bring joy and encouragement or the opposite?*
- 2) Paul had also heard of the **Refreshment** that Philemon caused.

B) Let's see what this *must* mean and *might* include:

- (a) Often in O.T. it had to do with food, water and shelter.
 - (b) But it usually it has to do with spiritual and emotional refreshing.
- 2) Used many times; here *"[Philemon] refreshed the hearts of the saints"*
 - (a) **Kardia** is one word for heart
 - (b) Here we have **splanchna="bowels"** which mean the innermost parts
 - (c) Here is KJV- *"because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother"*
 - 3) Philemon was attending to the spiritual needs of people.
 - (a) From this little letter we see his spiritual, caring emphasis
 - (b) **ILLUST: A Prison Visit**
 - 4) *Do you know another saint who bring us joy, encouragement and refreshment?*

III) PAUL PRAYS SO THAT PHILEMON WILL CONTINUE ACTIVE IN SHARING HIS FAITH

A) This Must Be An Ongoing Process

- 1) It Is Helpful To Understand And Appreciate Our Blessing In Christ

2) **ILLUST:** The Real Benefit Of Sharing

B) We Must Be In The Habit Of Sharing

1) It was Jesus who told us to do so- Matthew 28:18-20

2) **ILLUST:** Time To Fish

ILLUSTRATIONS USED IN THIS LESSON

A PRISON VISIT

The former televangelist, Jim Bakker, in his autobiography *I Was Wrong*, tells the story of his descent into ignominy, impoverishment and imprisonment. He lost his freedom, his sanity, his dignity, his confidence in his faith, and eventually even his wife. Inmate 07407-058, one-time confidant to presidents, had hit rock bottom.

At his very lowest point, a prison official came to him and said, 'Billy Graham is here to see you!' He thought, '*Billy Graham has come here ... to this place ... to see me?*' When he walked into the room Billy Graham turned towards him and opened his arms wide.

He said at that moment he felt total acceptance and love. '*I will never forget that the man who had just been voted one of the most influential men in the world and who has ministered to millions of people took time out of his busy schedule to come minister to one prisoner.*' He describes how in the midst of his depression, flu, filth and hopelessness, Billy Graham's *visit refreshed his heart and boosted his spirit. 'I felt as though Jesus Himself had come to visit me.'*

Refreshment means restoring strength, energy and vigour. A light snack is sometimes referred to as a '*refreshment*'. Physical refreshment can also come, for example, from sleep, rest, or exercise. Paul tells Philemon that he has '*refreshed the hearts of the saints*' (Philemon 7). Later on in the letter, Paul asks him to '*refresh my heart in Christ*' (v.20)

THE REAL BENEFIT OF SHARING

Many Christians feel that we need to learn more in order to grow in spiritual maturity. That has a truth to it, but the passage reminds us that we also grow as we share our faith with others. We will encounter questions that we don't know the answers to, and so we study to understand. We will learn how to be sensitive to those who don't agree with us, and we grow in compassion. Many times we don't need to learn more, we need to live out what we already know with those around us.

TIME TO FISH

Now, my dad once told me the story about a peculiar fisherman from Minnesota. You see, this fisherman was very well prepared. He knew how to fish. He had everything you need to be a good fisherman. He had poles, nets, bait, and even a really nice boat, but this fisherman had a problem. You see, **for all his preparation he never caught anything**. Not one fish. Not one, not ever. And **you know why** he never caught a fish? **He never went fishing**. He had all the **knowledge** and all the **equipment**, **but** he **never got into the boat**, he **never left the dock**.