

“Howbeit, Ye Did Well ...”

“... that ye had fellowship with me in my affliction. And ye yourselves know, ye Philippians, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church had fellowship with me in the matter of giving and receiving but ye only; for even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my needs ...” (Phil. 4:14-16).

Paul has assured the Philippians that he had learned the secret of how to both be filled and hungry; that he could do all things through Christ. Yet, he hastens to assure them that although he had learned that secret, the Philippians had done well to relieve his need, for he was in need and they had relieved it. First, if not most important, their gift made Paul know he had not been forgotten nor was he alone. It is an empty feeling to be alone, even though if God is with one, he is not truly alone. There is a heart rending tone in Paul's second letter to Timothy when he said: *“Only Luke is with me ...”* (2 Tim. 4:11). Their gift had lifted Paul's soul, and provoked one of the most tender, compassionate, and edifying letters from his pen. And, while Paul was directed by the Holy Spirit in the things he wrote; the Spirit did not cause Paul to express tenderness he did not feel, nor love which he did not have. Their gift echoed Paul's words to the Galatians: *“Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ”* (Gal. 6:2).

This response to Paul's needs was not the first time for these brethren. He reminded them that *“in the beginning of the gospel”* (when the gospel was first preached to them), when he departed from Macedonia, no church had had fellowship with him in the matter of giving (on their part); or receiving (on his part); but them, for they sent twice to him in Thessalonica. And likely Paul could have recorded another occasion of their help, writing the Corinthians, *“I robbed other churches, taking wages of them that I might minister unto you; and when I was present with you and was in want, I was not a burden upon any man; for the brethren when they came from Macedonia, supplied the measure of my want”* (2 Cor. 11:8f).

From the action of the Philippians, two examples emerge. Philippi had direct contact with Paul; they neither sent to a missionary society nor sponsoring church which in turn sent on to Paul. There was no “middle man;” they communicated directly with him. Their second example evident from these brethren is their appreciation for him who had brought the gospel to them. Although he had been put in prison there, they were not ashamed of him. When he was driven like a fugitive from both Thessalonica and Berea, they were not ashamed of him, they took his part. Like the Hebrews before them, they *“both had compassion on them that were in bonds and took joyfully the*

spoiling of your possessions, knowing that ye have for yourself a better possession and an abiding one" (Heb. 10:34). The gospel is the power to save our souls. Paul wrote, *"Be not ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, nor of me his prisoner"* (2 Tim. 1:8). Philippi was not! Nor should we be, either!

Jim McDonald