

# Broken and Poured Out

*17 But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. 18 So you too should be glad and rejoice with me." (Philippians 2:17-18)*

The e-mail began: "Bad news. You haven't been to the [health] club in three days and last night you had a bag of potato chips." The bulletin continued elaborating on a host of threats to body beautiful that the pattern noted above portended, unless immediately remedied. I wanted to reply: "Bad news." I don't even know where the health club is and on Christmas day I had a pound of Reese's peanut butter cups before breakfast." I was feeling ornery. A harangue about a sack of chips? Please! Someone forgot to tell Joe fit-n-flex where to get off.

Do you get as many "service" announcements as I do? Carefully crafted pieces designed to create a need in your life that only the marketer can meet for a price. Most of these "needs" are nothing of the sort and their delivery systems do not enable you but pander you. So, when I run into a service announcement unlike the advertising hype that is the regular fare, I take note.

Philippians 2:17-18 is just such a message. These touching verses describe Paul's life as being poured out alongside the Philippians' sacrifice. They were priests together, making spiritual sacrifices to God because of their faith in Jesus Christ.

Note three things. First, the term used. The verb translated "poured out" occurs only twice in the New Testament. Both instances use the passive voice as a metaphor for Paul's suffering and impending martyrdom (Phil 2:17; 2 Tim 4:6). The use of the passive voice tells us that Paul did not pour out his own life in some piously heroic gesture. The apostle abandoned himself to God to do as Yahweh pleased and accepted the agents and circumstances God used to produce in him "the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing" (2 Cor 2:15).

Second, the backdrop to the term. "Poured out" carries with it an Old Testament word picture of the drink offering used to baste the meat offering to sweeten it just prior to its offering on the altar. Paul regarded his own life as a sacrifice in the interests of the spiritual advancement of the Philippians. He did not see himself as an apostolic shogun, but as an equipper and enabler of the brethren. His ministry was preparatory to theirs and one measure of his usefulness was their faithful and effective service.

Third, the pattern behind the term. This manner of Paul's ministry is decidedly like the self-emptying posture of the Lord Jesus, described in Philippians 2:6-8. Guess what? That is no accident! Lifting high the cross of Christ has a "mode" to it. We are to take up our cross, as He did, and follow Him (see Lk 9:23). This is the way our ministry speaks authentically to those around us.

So, what is your drift, RV? I can do no better than to quote Amy Carmichael:

From prayer that asks that I may be  
Sheltered from winds that beat on Thee  
From fearing when I should aspire  
From faltering when I should climb higher  
From silken self, O Captain, free  
Thy soldier who would follow Thee.  
From subtle love of softening things

From easy choices, weakening  
Not thus were spirits fortified  
Not this way went the Crucified  
From all that dims Thy Calvary  
O Lamb of God, deliver me.