

# GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

Vol. XII

August 3, 2003

No. 31

## LETTERS OF COMMENDATION

By: Jerry Fite

More than once in the New Testament, we read words commending a person to a group of Christians. After Apollos had learned the way of God more accurately, the brethren wrote a letter commending him to the brethren in Achaia (*Acts 18:26-27*). Paul “commended” Phoebe to the saints in Rome as a “*servant of the church in Cenchreae*,” and as a “*helper of many*”. According to Paul’s commendation, Phoebe was to be received “*worthily of the saints*,” therefore worthy to be helped if need arose (*Romans 16:1-3*).

When Saul desired to join himself with the group of saints in Jerusalem, Barnabas needed to speak on his behalf. Brethren had a right to be fearful, for Saul had persecuted so many of the saints in Jerusalem (*Acts 8:3*). Saul had a right to be defended, for he had become a servant of God through Christ following his seeing the Lord, the Lord speaking to him, and his bold preaching in the name of the Lord in Damascus (*Acts 9:27*).

The need of letters or words of commendation were to

inform brethren that the person in their midst was worthy to be accepted as a faithful and fellow brother or sister in Christ.

Paul speaks of a letter of commendation which was not written on paper with ink, nor was it communicated orally, as Barnabas did on Paul’s behalf. This letter of commendation was simply the character of the lives of many in Corinth. These Christians were “*known and read of all men*” To such observers, they were “*an epistle of Christ*” (*2 Corinthians 3: 2-3*).

These Christians commended Paul because he had taught them the gospel. They had made changes in their life, turning from ungodly deeds and life styles, to godly and holy living (*cf. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11*). With confidence, he could point to “*hearts of flesh*” which had received the gospel he preached and write, “*ye are our epistle...*” (*2 Corinthians 3:2*).

Two observations are appropriate at this time in our history as a congregation. As you brethren in South Houston are no longer meeting together and functioning as a local congregation, many of

you are coming to join yourselves with us to work in the kingdom of the Lord. We welcome you as faithful servants of the Lord. No, we do not have a letter from someone commending you. Your godly character and faithful service up to the present time is a great “*letter of commendation*.” From a distance, we have “*known and read*” you and have observed that you are truly an “*epistle of Christ*.”

The character of your life serves also as a letter of commendation of the teachers and preachers in your midst, who have preached unto you the truth of the Gospel. Brethren Osby Weaver and Shad Edwards have not shirked their responsibility in proclaiming unto you “*the whole counsel of God*.” (*Acts 20:27*). These men preached the word and made application even when issues that needed to be addressed were considered by some as controversial. Your strength in the Lord is their letter of commendation.

Is your life a letter of commendation?