

## Longing To See Someone

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by Bill Crews

In Paul's first epistle (1 Thessalonians, written from Corinth during the apostle's second preaching journey) he wrote: *"But when Timothy came even now unto us from you, and brought us good tidings of your faith and love, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, longing to see us, even as we also to see you"* (1 Thessalonians 3:6). Each longed to see the other, and it would be a matter of some six years before it would happen.

To the saints at Rome Paul wrote: *"For I long to see you"* (Romans 1:11 — he had never been to Rome), and: *"having these many years a longing to come unto you"* (Romans 15:23). He finally made it some three years later, when he was escorted there in chains as a prisoner of the Roman government. The brethren had met him on the last leg of a long journey from Caesarea.

One of the most moving of Paul's epistles is that to the Christians in Philippi. To them he said: *"For God is my witness, how I long after you all in the tender mercies of Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 1:8). He called them *"my brethren beloved and longed/or"* (Philippians 4:1). He was writing from Rome while a prisoner awaiting his audience with Caesar. Perhaps during the interval between his two imprisonments at Rome, he did get to see them again.

Paul's final epistle was the second one to Timothy. Once again he was a prisoner of the Roman government, but now in a dungeon and condemned to die. In the opening verses he writes: *"Longing to see thee, remembering thy tears, that I may be filled with joy"* (2 Timothy 1:4). He beseeches Timothy to *"give diligence to come shortly unto me"* (2 Timothy 4:9) and to *"give diligence to come before winter"* (2 Timothy 4:21 — for then he could not travel). Whether Paul in this life ever laid eyes again on the young man who had become a brother in the Lord, friend, fellow-worker, dependable messenger and evangelist, like a son, and a traveling companion for some seventeen years, we do not know.

All the foregoing are intense and important, but to me they at least suggest and bring to mind the following: This life is filled with changing scenes, crowded by our own choices with more than we can ever get around to, and so soon over and gone. Most of us live in many places and make many acquaintances, and then long to see them, but never do.

It is sad when families and relatives become widely scattered and are rarely together. The longing to see each other may be there all the time, but is rarely expressed and less rarely realized. (I came from a family of eight children, but our parents lived to be 80 and 89. After the children were all grown, married and "out of the nest," we had only one family reunion with everybody present. The years flew by, and then death started bringing the survivors together. Only a few "get togethers" satisfied our longing to see each other. Now only an older brother and myself remain.)

We make many friends in life, but we get out of touch and lose track of each other, and end up merely longing to see, but never seeing. There were times we knew the right addresses and the correct phone numbers, but neither wrote nor called (and now we have e-mails and texting). There were times we passed right through the towns they lived in, but made no effort to contact them. But that was long ago, and now we long to see them, but know neither how nor where.

Among the dearest, and most loved, and respected, and appreciated of all friends are faithful brethren in Christ, here and there in many places. Memories of them are pleasant, and to be in their presence again would be joy unspeakable. But we are busy (so we think), and they are busy (so we surmise), and we cannot find time or do not take time to "get in touch" — to write, to phone, to email, to text or, better, to visit. And I find this one of the saddest things in this life — a longing to connect or to see in person, not expressed, not realized. It is a great consolation that all faithful children of God, who have known each other here, may look forward to an eternal reunion over there on "the other and eternal shore."

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