

Remembering Charles

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Charles Ross was an evangelist sent from the Excelsior Springs Church of Christ. He loved the Lord's people and was a friend to many. He met people from all walks of life and met them with ease and friendliness. He had no arrogance, nor did he set himself above others. He was easy to engage in concerning matters of faith. At the end of the day, you were better for being with him.

He was a highly intelligent man with a unique way of looking at life. Charles could stretch your mind by being two or three steps ahead in the conversation. He would converse as if you tracked the process without explanation. His point of view would often come from an unexpected angle. For example, while discussing the value of elders in the local church, he observed, "Our elders pray for us." Another time, Charles made this startling comment, "What that situation needs is an old grouchy elder to set things right." There was an occasion where gifts of benevolence were being distributed. He stated the obvious; "The best way for this to be done would be for the church to have deacons. They would know the needs of the congregation." His distinct perspective was always stimulating and edifying.

He had a high regard for the Lord's plan. He believed that churches should practice within the framework the Lord gave. He respected the work of elders and deacons appointed from within the congregation. He applied himself to the support and maintenance of this.

Charles came from a rural area where the density of population was small. He worked for many years with small congregations and saw their value. His actions declared that where two or more are gathered in the name of the Lord, Jesus would be there; the purpose of God was being carried out. He was often accompanied by his wife, Diana. They loved the brethren and never made them ashamed of being few in number. Thus, they were always welcomed and appreciated.

On two occasions, I had the opportunity to accompany him to the Philippines. We were together for an extended period, and he was an easy companion. He was not demanding. This quality made him an easy fit with the many people we met and the change of culture we experienced. He didn't meet our hosts and new acquaintances with expectations of preferential treatment. Rather, he respected them and their culture. He rolled with the changes from Metro Manila to the remote areas. He was loved by the brethren in the Philippines. They knew he loved them and cared about them.

Charles had two areas of focus in our travels to the Philippines:

1. The spiritual – teaching the value of mutual edification and development of elders and deacons. He encouraged the growth of everyone.
2. The question of what could be done to aid the material needs of the brethren – particularly where there was more poverty.

Charles' emphasis on these areas was tied together with love.

A great quality Charles possessed was love for the Lord's saving power. I think this was the reason he could meet all manner of people well, regardless of their social status, acumen, or cultural framework. He saw the deep importance of salvation and the great value the Lord placed on each soul made alive in Christ. When there was a rift among friends, he sought to aid in the mending of fences. When there was disagreement over a point of doctrine, he was thoughtful. When there was rejoicing for a soul's victory in the service of God's love, Charles was thankful.

It is the Lord alone who can say, "Well done." His declaration will be for eternity. But for us, there is the comfort of hope and appreciation for a life lived among us. Charles will be greatly missed. To summarize, here are words given by the Spirit of the Lord:

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner; but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was

given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (2 Timothy 1:8-10).