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“From the Pastor’s Desk”

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TRIBUTE TO PASTOR ORVEL TAYLOR

President Emeritus of Grace International, Inc.

Senior Pastor of Colonial Tabernacle – Faith Christian Assembly

Our hearts and thoughts were filled with several emotions when the news reached us that our beloved Pastor, friend, and President Emeritus had departed from this life and stepped into the presence of the One we both love and serve. Earth has lost a precious jewel but heaven gained a royal treasure. We who have known him throughout most of our lifetimes, will always be thankful to our Lord for the day when our Lord made it possible, not only our introduction to this godly man, but a lifetime of fellowship, friendship, and countless benefits that come from such a wonderful relationship.

Throughout the years it has been my privilege to write several eulogies for people who we have come to love and admire. The challenge in writing such an article can be most difficult when your heart is full of love and admiration for such a person as Brother Taylor. He was no ordinary man, he excelled in many virtues in which the Holy Scriptures have well-defined. That is why we feel limited in our choice of words to write such an article in which such a person deserves.

Brother Taylor was to Ginny and I more than a fellow clergyman, acquaintance, senior advisor, counselor, and organization official. I dare say most of us who knew him well could say this without any exaggeration. He is one of the few men that made everyone feel special. Every once in awhile Ginny and I would receive a personal note, letter or phone call from him conveying his thoughts, love, and support in what we were doing both in ministry and our personal lives. He made us feel ten feet tall.

Naturally I am confident to say that we were not the only ones to which he would write and convey such an encouraging word. I dare say he did the same for many others. It is wonderful when someone you admire, as we did, can feel a similar feeling of love and devotion in return. To us this was truly a blessing. Ginny and I will always cherish those letters, cards, and notes throughout the rest of our lives because we have kept them in a special file under his name under lock and key in a special vault...because they contain things which have helped us in our difficult times to come through knowing that we had his support and love.

You see, we felt, if Brother Taylor said it, it must be true. Just imagine how Timothy felt when he knew he had the support of the Apostle Paul. Such correspondence from a caliber of man as Brother Taylor carried the weight of an Apostle. Everybody, including pastors, need someone in their corner, praying, comforting, and supporting when life gets rough. Brother Taylor was always that kind of man for us.

Some fifty years ago, while the Taylors were Lead pastors of Colonial Tabernacle, Ginny and I were struggling in our second pastorate. We had miserably failed in our first attempt at pastoring and it looked like the second attempt was going to end up the same as the first pastorate. We were doing everything that we had been told to make it go. From going door to door, passing out thousands of invitations, bringing in the best speakers we could find, praying and fasting; you name it we tried it, radio and television....all to no avail. While we had a few people which helped pay the bills there was nothing to write home about.

The thing that helped us through those difficult years was the friendship of the Taylors. They never made us feel like failures. They accepted us just as we were and loved us just the same. It was that love and affection that drew us to them. Just having the opportunity to sit with them in a restaurant talking and enjoying sweet fellowship, warmed our hearts in such a way that sent us back to our calling and mission to continue doing the work to which we were called. Though distinguished leaders of the founding church of our organization they didn't act like inspectors, but rather served as fellow servants in the work of the Lord. We will always be thankful for this support.

One of the outstanding characteristics of Brother Taylor was his humility. Of all the times that I have been with him in church services, committee meetings, conferences, or in private conversations I have never heard him use any of his titles in his discussions in order to promote himself to some honor or use it to manipulate or enforce his conviction of some issue.

We who have served along the side of him already knew him to be knowledgeable, wise, and proven in those things to which he always excelled. It isn't often that a local church or organization, such as ours, is blessed with the caliber of man that Brother Taylor has been. We were blessed just to have his presence in our meetings and serving our churches. I have seen him on several occasions speak a word of wisdom that turned a business meeting in a more positive direction that enabled the committee to find a solution when up to that time it seemed hopeless. *"A word spoken in due season, how good is it!"* Prov. 15:23

Brother Taylor was a man who could give you good financial counsel as well as Spiritual counsel in God's Word. He was a reader, a thinker, and a doer. He did not merely preach what he believed but he practiced it in his daily life. He had eyes that could penetrate the soul, but a smile that warmed the heart. His speech was soft and gentle, but he knew how to speak with authority.

My parents were struggling with the Social Security Department over a particular issue which was affecting their income. But when Brother Taylor heard about it he went to speak on their behalf. While the people at the S.S. Department continued to challenge what he was advocating...they soon figured out that he knew what he was talking about. When they left the meeting that day, my folk's finances improved, Brother Taylor had enlighten even the government officials.

For the past twenty-seven years Ginny and I have served as Lead Pastors of Faith Christian Assembly in Seal Beach. We owe that to Brother Taylor and his expressed desire that we follow him prior to his retirement. It could not have come at a better time in our lives and we will forever be grateful for the open door and opportunity because of his graciousness in showing us his favor in this decision. I realize that he had a list of several ministers which he could have endorsed, but out of the good grace of his heart, we were chosen.

This pastorate has been the favorite of all these years of pastoring. I guess that is why we have stayed so long. It was a decision that enabled Ginny and I to be near our children, who also serve in ministry. But in the end, also made it possible to have them come along and serve along our side. Some would call that luck, others may call it favoritism, but I call it grace which God has given. We have seen God work wonders through these many years and we believe the greatest wonder was in giving us the favor with the Taylors for which we will forever be grateful.

God seems to use all kinds of people for the work of the ministry. Some are dynamic, sensational, talented, and popular. Then there are others who one may say are mediocre and probably are quickly forgotten even by the very people they serve. Some people enter the ministry because of the need for recognition and maybe even housing and employment. In my sixty plus years of ministry we have seen many come and go. But the thing that has made the ministry wonderful for Ginny and I is not our *"so-called success"*...because I am not so sure how one can truly measure that. But we have been thrilled by the fact that we have been given the opportunity to work in a field we love, with people we love, and work that wakes us up in the morning being thankful for being chosen for such a life-time of service.

I really don't know what the Lord will say when I stand before Him and give account of what we have done in ministry. I don't know whether he will clap or want to slap. He may say *"Stand aside and let me think about it for a while."* I hope I will be able to make a defense for myself, I am not sure whether that will do any good. But I think that possibly I might ask Brother Taylor to put in good word for me. Because, if there is anyone who could do it; he would be the one. How do I know? Because he wrote us letters that made us feel we had not only his favor, but the favor of God. Now I know what I have just written may not be considered biblically sound, but in my grief over our loss let me at least dream. You see, my mother-in-law, who didn't even approve of my marriage to her daughter attended Brother Taylor's church. And I am sure that he heard about everything that I ever did wrong and she probably was right. Her affection for Brother Taylor was such that he was almost a "god" to her. He could do no wrong. Yet, he was the same man that hand-picked me to replace him in the pastorate of his church. So if he could do that...he surely would be of help in my entrance into heaven on the day of rewards. Thank You, Brother Taylor, for my possible entry into the Pearly Gates. Amen.