

December 9

Romans 12-16

Today you read Romans 12 and 13 and once again this section begins with the word "therefore." This time it refers back to the whole first section of the book, which encompassed chapters 1-11. In that magnificent doctrinal treatise Paul has established the universality of sin (1:18 - 3:20). He has explained the doctrine of justification by faith (3:21 ff). He has illustrated that doctrine with Abraham and David (chapter 4) and exhibited its results in chapters 5-8. Finally he has shown in 9-11 that God is not yet finished with Israel. Now in chapters 12-16, the second section of the book, Paul turns his attention to the practical implications that relate to daily living which flow from all that he has said.

Now at this point a half dozen people or so are dejectedly saying, 'fair enough, but I don't know what my gift is so how can I minister to the body of Christ. There is one very simple question you might ask. "What does the body of Christ, the Church need and what can I do to meet that need?" That one question will go a long way toward uncovering some of the gifts that God has given you to minister to his Church.

The next few chapters continue something that begins in Romans 12, right after the "body" passage. In the midst of a whole host of rapid-fire injunctions, a pattern begins to emerge, as we are told to do this or that for "one another." The first of the "one anothers" is found in 12:10. "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love, then honor one another above yourselves." "Live in harmony with one another (verse 16), live at peace with one another." These "one another" references -- nearly 60 of them in all -- are scattered throughout the entire New Testament, built upon the body illustration and enforcing the nature of our commitment to one another. One of the most basic facts about the Christian's life is this: it is life together -- a "one another" life -- life lived in community -- in relationship with other Christians. One of the best places to connect is in a Journey Group or Small Group. If you need more information, drop me a note and I can connect you with folks to assist you.

The relationship of the Christian to government and civil authority is the subject of Romans chapter 13. It is not always easy to be citizens of two kingdoms, the heavenly one and the earthly one. But it is our task to do all that we can to be obedient and peaceable citizens of our earthly countries.

As we continue into Romans 14-15 one of the key words of this book is the word freedom! Freedom from sin, freedom from law, freedom from death -- those words aptly summarize the contents of chapters 6-8 -- freedom. But how will we use that freedom?

Paul teaches about freedom in chapters 14 and 15 focusing on the "one anothers" found in verse 7 of chapter 15: "Accept one another just as Christ accepted you in order to bring praise to God." The way Paul says that we can show our "freedom and acceptance" of one another is by practicing the Christian virtue of charity. We

have liberty, (and we may exercise it,) but we are called upon to practice love first and not our own rights first.

As we near the end of our reading, it is interesting to note that Romans 16 seems to strongly suggest that the church in Rome was really a group of small house churches meeting in different homes throughout the city and surrounding area. Many of the workers noted and greeted were in all probability the individuals responsible for caring for and nurturing the believers in these house churches or multi-sites. The picture that emerges here is one of health and strength, as the believers in Rome grew together in Christ.

Before we close, let's review the book together:

In chapter 1, the main theme of the book is given in verse 16--"I am not ashamed of the gospel ..." and then we learned that all men began with a knowledge of God, but that sin corrupts and tends inevitably toward idolatry. Chapter 2 taught us that just having the great privilege of special revelation is not sufficient to save. In fact, everyone relying on the law for salvation will fail in their goal. Chapter 3 contains the turning point of the epistle in verse 21, "But now a righteousness from God has been revealed, a righteousness apart from the law." This righteousness comes through Jesus Christ, our new standard for living.

Chapter 4 talks about "justification by faith" illustrated in the lives of Abraham and David. Chapter 5 compares the two Adams who represented mankind, one in failure and sin, and one in obedience and righteousness. Chapter 6 describes our freedom from law. Chapter 7 shows us how to live out our freedom from sin. Chapter 8 proclaims our freedom from death through the life and ministry of the Holy Spirit--nothing can separate us!

Chapter 9 stated in such clear and unambiguous terms the doctrine of election that it is impossible for us to evade. Chapter 10 taught the rationale or apology for missionary work. Chapter 11 answers the question about what will happen to the Jewish people.

Chapter 12 brings us that wonderful "body analogy", explaining that, in the body of Christ, the church, we need "one another." Chapter 13 deals with the Christian and his relationship to civil authorities. Chapters 14-15 outline the principles governing the stronger and weaker brothers, telling how to live in an attitude of acceptance and humility. Finally, chapter 16 contains Paul's personal greetings and hope to visit these dear believers.

This is a wonderful book that has changed the way I study doctrine by bringing it alive for daily living. I hope it has been an enjoyable four days of reading and that you have taken away new insights to live out your life in Christ. If you don't know Jesus as your Savior yet, please turn to Romans 10.9-10 and follow the steps to lead

you to Him and with him for all of eternity! Thanks again for reading and listening today.