

Monday 9/4

Related Verses

Rom. 13:1-2, 5, 7-8, 10 (pray-read the **BOLD** vvs)
1 Let every person be subject to the authorities over him, for there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are ordained by God.

2 So then he who resists the authority opposes God's ordination, and those who oppose will receive judgment to themselves.

5 Therefore it is necessary to be subject, not only because of wrath but also because of conscience.

7 Render to all the things due: tax to whom tax is due, custom to whom custom is due, fear to whom fear is due, honor to whom honor is due.

8 Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves the other has fulfilled the law.

10 Love does not work evil to his neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

Related Reading

Romans 13:1 says, "Let every person be subject to the authorities over them. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are appointed by God." A natural character is a rebellious character, but a transformed character is submissive. Subjecting ourselves to the authorities appointed by God requires a certain amount of transformation. Sisters, if you want to submit to your husbands, you need transformation. If we are submissive to God's appointed authorities, it is an indicator that we have a certain amount of transformation, because our natural character and disposition are rebellious. We were born rebellious, and our natural response to authority is to say, "No." Thus, subjection to authority requires transformation from the growth in life. "Therefore he who resists the authority opposes what God has appointed, and those who oppose will receive to themselves judgment" (v. 2). It is not good to resist authority. Either the judgment will descend upon

you from the authority or it will come to you directly from God.

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"Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet, and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this word, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Love does not work evil to his neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law." The commandment to love sums up all the other commandments. We need the Holy Spirit to work in us and to give us an amount of transformation in life that we may practice love toward all men. Love is the expression of life. It is not just an outward behavior, but an expression of the inward life. Simply trying to love without the supply of life does not work. In order to love people and spontaneously fulfill the commandments, we need the life supply and the transformation in life. Our natural life is not a life of God's love. We need to be transformed in life that we may have God's nature of love to love people. If we are careless in loving others, we do not need transformation in life. But if we are going to practice love toward all men, we need to be transformed in life.

Now we come to transformation in waging the warfare, meaning spiritual warfare. Verse 11 says, "And this, knowing the time, that now is the hour for you to be raised out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we believed." Salvation here means salvation in the last stage, which is the redemption of our body. Salvation encompasses our spirit, soul, and body. In the first stage of salvation, the Lord regenerates our spirit; in the second stage, He transforms our soul; and in the third stage, which is the last, at the time of His return He will transfigure our vile body into a glorious one (Phil. 3:21). When verse 11 says that

our salvation is nearer than when we believed, it is referring to the third stage of salvation, the transfiguration of our body. In other words, this refers to the redemption of our body, or, to use another term, the full sonship revealed in 8:19, 21, and 23.

We need to realize that now is the time to wake up from sleep. Although night is the time for sleep, "the night is far advanced" (13:12). So, we should wake up, be watchful, and sleep no more.

The present age is the nighttime. When the Lord Jesus returns, day will dawn. The next age will be the daytime. Since the night is advanced and the day is near, we need not only to wake up from sleep, but also to cast off the works of darkness and put on the weapons of light (v. 12). This indicates a warfare.

"Let us walk becomingly as in the day; not in revelling and drunkenness, not in immorality and debauchery, not in strife and jealousy" (v. 13). All of these works must be cast aside. They are the works of darkness, and we are the children of the day.

Verse 14 is very important. "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts." In verse 12 we are told to "put on the weapons of light" and in verse 14 to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ." By placing these two phrases together, we can see that the Lord Jesus Christ is Himself the weapons of light. Furthermore, the phrase "make no provision for the flesh" corresponds to 8:12, where Paul says that "we are debtors not to the flesh to live according to flesh." The warfare in 13:14 is between the lusts and the Spirit as in Galatians 5:17. Christ is the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17). Thus, we must put on Christ in order to fight the battle against our lusts. Here the warfare does not concern the devil or the principalities in the air as in Ephesians 6:12; it concerns the lusts against which we must fight by putting on the Lord

Jesus Christ as our weapons of light. This kind of warfare is different from that in 7:23. There it is the evil law in our flesh warring against the good law in our mind; it has nothing to do with the Spirit. But here it is that we, by putting on Christ, fight against the fleshy works of darkness.

What does it mean to put on Christ? We have been baptized into Christ and are already in Christ (Rom. 6:4; Gal. 3:27). Why then must we still put on Christ? To put on Christ actually means to live by Christ and to live out Christ. Although we are in Christ, we need to live by Christ and to live out Christ practically. We need to have a daily living that is by Christ and that expresses Christ. The expression of Christ in our daily life is our weapon for fighting against the flesh. Since the battle in verse 14 is not against the devil and spiritual wickedness, but against the flesh with all of its lusts, we need to live by Christ. The more we live by Christ, the more He becomes our weapons against the lusts of the flesh.

Paul says that we should “make no provision for the flesh.” We should not supply the flesh with anything. This indicates that the flesh continues to exist. Regardless of how spiritual we become, the flesh can still be revived. The flesh is hungry and desires food, but we must starve it to death, making no provision that will allow it to fulfill its lusts.

What does it mean to make provision for the flesh? Since the young people especially may find it difficult to understand this, I would like to give some illustrations. The present human society is dark and evil, containing numerous provisions for the flesh. Consider, for instance, the newspapers with their pictures and advertisements. I do not believe that anyone is so spiritual that when he sees an evil picture in the newspaper that he will not be influenced. Your experiences will testify to you that when you looked at some of the advertisements and pictures in the newspapers your flesh was aroused.

Those movie advertisements were a provision for the flesh. Furthermore, television has also been much used by the enemy to provide food for the hungry flesh. I am not legal to say that Christians should not watch television, but I do say that it is better to keep away from it. Do not think that you are so strong. Suppose there is a deep well nearby. If I do not wish to fall into the well, I should stay away from it and not walk around it. However, if I continue to walk near the well, although I may not fall in it today, I probably will in the future. It is better to be protected and stay away from the well. Likewise, it is dangerous to watch television. If you intend to watch television, you should pray, “Lord, look at the television with me. Be one with me in my spirit to watch television.” If you pray in this way, it may be all right for you to do it. Otherwise, perhaps you should consider giving it up. At any rate, television has been a powerful means for the enemy to make provision for the flesh, and many evil things have occurred as a result of its influence.

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Without the living of such a normal life, we are lacking the necessary base for the church life. I believe that this was the reason that, immediately after describing the practice of the church life, Paul presents the requirements of the living of a normal human life. The best presentation of the normal living in the entire Bible is found in these verses. Therefore, we need to pray over them and fellowship with one another concerning them.

(Excerpts from Life-study of Romans, Message 27)

Tuesday 9/5

Related Verses

Rom. 14:1, 3, 6, 8-10, 12

1 Now him who is weak in faith receive, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his considerations.

3 He who eats, let him not despise him who does not eat; and he who does not eat, let him not judge him who eats, for God has received him.

6 He who regards that day, regards it to the Lord; and he who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who does not eat, does not eat to the Lord, and he gives thanks to God.

8 For whether we live, we live to the Lord, and whether we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore whether we live or we die, we are the Lord's.

9 For Christ died and lived again for this, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

10 But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God,

12 So then each one of us will give an account concerning himself to God.

Related Reading

In order to receive our fellow believers in the Lord, we need transformation. If we remain natural, we shall be unable to go along with others. In fact, according to our natural disposition, we cannot even agree with ourselves consistently. We all fight with ourselves. Thus, it is very difficult for any Christian remaining in his natural disposition to go along with others. Receiving the saints requires transformation. I believe that Paul's word in Romans 12:2 concerning being transformed by the renewing of the mind not only governs the section on the practice of the Body life, but also all the other chapters relating to the church life. Transformation governs the items found in chapter thirteen as well as some of the aspects of chapters fourteen and fifteen. If we are not transformed to at least a certain degree, we shall be unable to be one with other believers. Although we may meet with them, we shall be unable to fellowship with them or to open ourselves to them. If we were to open ourselves to them, we would end up fighting with them because we are untransformed and so natural in our concept, behavior, and all that we are and do.

Thus, in order to receive our fellow believers, we need transformation. All of Romans 14 and part of 15 is devoted to this matter. As we shall see, Paul deals with the receiving of the believers with respect to five main points.

We must receive the saints according to God's receiving of them. Whomever God has received, we are compelled to receive. We have no choice. Consider a family with many children. Some of the children are good and the others bad; some are sweet and the others naughty. Perhaps in such a large family some of the children may not be happy with all of their brothers and sisters. However, the children must realize that it does not rest with them to determine who their brothers and sisters will be. That depends upon the parents. If one of the children in this family thinks that his brother is ugly and complains against him, his complaint should not be directed against his brother, but against his parents who brought him forth. Our heavenly Father has brought forth many children, many Christians, and He has received them all. Therefore, we also must receive them, not according to our tastes or preferences, but according to God's receiving.

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Paul knew how important was the matter of receiving the believers and consequently he devoted all of chapter fourteen plus part of chapter fifteen to this subject. In Romans 12 we see the Body. In Romans 14 we are given a warning. If we do not take heed to this warning, we shall use doctrine as a knife to cut in pieces the very Body revealed in chapter twelve. Many Christians talk about the Body of Christ according to Romans 12; nevertheless, they are responsible for killing the Body and for cutting it into pieces by wielding the knife of doctrinal divisiveness. This is why the Body that is revealed according to Romans 12 must be lived out according to Romans 14. Without Romans 14 we are unable to have the proper

practice of the Body unveiled in chapter twelve. Many Christians pay attention to Romans 12, but neglect Romans 14, talking about the Body, but remaining divisive and divided because they continue to hold to their doctrinal concepts. They are unwilling to drop them. Thus, it is impossible for them to experience the Body life. Therefore, Paul, after revealing the proper church life and the normal Christian life, takes up the crucial point of receiving the believers. If we do not care for this point, we shall commit spiritual suicide as far as the church life is concerned. In order to have the Body life, we must receive the believers according to God's receiving of them in a general way, not according to our doctrinal concepts in a particular way.

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In 14:1 Paul says, "Now him who is weak in faith receive." Some believers are weak in faith because they have not yet received much of the transfusing and infusing of the element of God into them. Nevertheless, they do have a measure of faith and must be received.

Some believers, being weak in faith, dare not to eat everything or to regard every day the same. Yet they do have a measure of faith and are genuine believers in Christ. So, based upon this measure of faith of theirs and the fact that they are believers, we must receive them.

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In Romans 14 Paul himself was an excellent example of not passing judgment on doctrinal reasonings, for he did not express his opinion about which doctrine is right or wrong. Certainly he knew the correct doctrines about eating and about the keeping of days. Nevertheless, he did not take sides, but charged all of us to be general and not to criticize others. Let others be free to eat whatever they want and to keep whatever day they want. To

them one day is holier than another, but to the ones who are stronger in faith every day is the same.

We also must learn not to pass judgments on doctrinal reasonings. When people ask you about the method of baptism or the kind of water used, you should not get into a doctrinal argument. In other words, do not make a judgment on the matter. The best way to reply to doctrinal questions is to help people to turn themselves from doctrinal concepts to Christ who is our life. By nature, we are all inclined to convince others and to argue with them about our concepts. We must avoid that.

In 14:3 Paul says "for God has received him." This is the basis on which we receive others. As long as our Father has received a person, we must also receive him. We have no choice. Regardless how weak or how peculiar a believer may be, we must receive him.

Let us read 14:6-9. "He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. For none of us lives to himself, and none dies to himself; for whether we live, we live to the Lord, or if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For Christ died and lived again for this, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living." All genuine believers are the Lord's. All have been born of the same Lord regardless of the way in which they have been baptized, of the food they eat, or the days they observe. Verses 6 through 9 show us what is important and what is not important. To live for the Lord and to belong to the Lord are important. As long as a person belongs to the Lord and lives to Him, he is all right. We must not place further demands upon him in accordance with our doctrinal concepts. If, on the other hand, we begin to argue about doctrine, we shall soon be divided according to our various concepts. We must

care for the important things. As long as God the Father has received us all and as long as we believe in the Lord and live to Him, we should receive one another.

Furthermore, we must also receive the saints in the light of the judgment seat. We need to read verses 10 through 12. “But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of God. For it is written, As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then, each one of us shall give account of himself to God.” The “judgment-seat of God” of verse 10 is the “judgment seat of Christ” of 2 Corinthians 5:10. The judgment at the judgment seat of God will be held before the millennium, immediately after Christ’s return (1 Cor. 4:5; Matt. 16:27; 25:19; Luke 19:15), and the life and work of the believers will be judged at that time (Rev. 22:12; Matt. 16:27; 1 Cor. 4:5; 3:13-15; Matt. 25:19; Luke 19:15). This judgment has nothing to do with a believer’s salvation, for everyone who appears at the judgment seat of God will have already been saved. This judgment will judge the believers’ life and work after they have been saved. This judgment will determine a believer’s reward in the millennial kingdom (Matt. 25:21, 23; Luke 19:17, 19; 1 Cor. 3:14-15; Matt. 16:27; Rev. 22:12; Luke 14:14; 2 Tim. 4:8). The believers will stand before this judgment seat to give account to God of their life and work. Here is Paul’s thought: we should not argue with others or criticize them, but take care of ourselves, because one day we shall stand before the judgment seat of God to give an account of our life and work after we were saved. Since this judgment concerns how the believers have lived before the Lord and what they have worked for the Lord after they were saved, and since the transformation of the believers has very much to do with this judgment, it is mentioned here in the section on transformation.

We must receive the believers in the light of the judgment seat of God. We should not criticize others, but judge ourselves. If we do not judge ourselves, we shall have to give an account before the judgment seat of Christ. Some believers judged the ones who wanted to get rid of their oldness by the water burial, but did not judge themselves for going to the movies. If you criticize others without judging yourself for attending the movies, at the judgment seat the Lord will ask you to give an account of that. Some sisters in a certain group cover their head with a long white covering and are accustomed to judging and condemning other sisters who pray without a covering or who, at best, only wear a small cap. Although these sisters cover themselves with a long white covering in the church meetings, some of them usurp the headship of their husbands at home. They need to judge themselves in this matter. Do not judge others, judge yourself. Whenever we are about to receive another believer in the Lord, we must exercise our discernment in the light of the judgment seat and say, “O Lord, have mercy on me. I am not worthy to judge my brother. Cover me, Lord. I want to be judged by You. I want to pass judgment on myself, on my life and living.” This should be our attitude.

We should not criticize others, but should pass judgment on ourselves. If we fail to do it now, we shall stand before the judgment seat of God and do it then. We must all be enlightened by the judgment seat. Whenever a new believer comes to us, we must exercise our discernment in receiving him. However, in the light of the judgment seat of God, we must judge ourselves more. Thus, Paul’s thought in Romans 14:10-12 is that we should not judge others, but let the Lord take care of them. We should judge ourselves. As we are about to judge others, let us remember that the Lord will reckon with us when He returns. This is a serious matter.

(Excerpts from Life-study of Romans, Message 28)

Wednesday 9/6

Related Verses

Rom. 14:13, 15-16, 17-19, 21-23

13 Therefore let us judge one another no longer, but rather judge this: not to put a stumbling block or cause of falling before your brother.

15 For if because of food your brother is wounded, you no longer walk according to love. Do not destroy by your food that man for whom Christ died.

16 Therefore do not let your good be slandered;

17 For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

18 For he who serves Christ in this is well pleasing to God and approved by men.

19 So then let us pursue the things of peace and the things for building up one another.

21 It is good not to eat meat nor drink wine nor to do anything by which your brother stumbles.

22 The faith which you have, have to yourself before God. Blessed is he who does not judge himself in what he approves;

23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because it is not out of faith; for all that is not out of faith is sin.

Related Reading

If we receive the believers in love, we shall not judge others, not put stumbling blocks before them, not grieve the brothers, not destroy the man for whom Christ died, but rather walk according to love. We must receive in the principle of love all the believers for whom Christ died. Please remember that Romans was written shortly after Paul had written 1 Corinthians, and that he wrote Romans from Corinth. Paul devoted 1 Corinthians 13 to the matter of love, inserting it between the two chapters that deal with spiritual gifts. In chapter thirteen Paul presented the most excellent way of exercising the gifts and he listed many of the

attributes and characteristics of love. I believe that this concept of love was fresh within him when he wrote chapter fourteen of Romans. Therefore, in Romans, it seems that Paul was telling the saints, “You must receive others in the principle of love. Love must govern you. Love must be the controlling principle in the receiving of the saints.”

The receiving of the believers is not an insignificant matter. It is related to the judgment seat in the future and it concerns the kingdom life in the present.

According to the context, verse 16 refers to the eating by the ones who are stronger in faith. It is good to be strong in the faith that there is nothing common and that everything is suitable for eating. But you should not let your good be slandered in your being unwilling to take care of those who are weak in faith. For their sake, you must be careful about eating what you think is good for eating. Paul’s intention is that, for the sake of the weaker ones, it is better that you not eat.

The church is the kingdom of God in this age (Matt. 16:18-19; 1 Cor. 6:10; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5). There is much argument between various schools of teaching concerning the kingdom of God. One school of thought claims that the kingdom of God is not with us today. According to this school, the kingdom of God was suspended at the time of Matthew 13. This school affirms that when the Lord Jesus came He came with the kingdom of God and presented it to the Jewish people. Since the Jewish people rejected the kingdom of God, the Lord suspended it until the time of His return. Thus, this school teaches that during the period in which we live there is no kingdom of God. However, Romans 14:17 says “the kingdom of God is...” This is a strong proof that the kingdom of God is here today. Further evidence that the church is the kingdom of God today is found in Matthew 16:18-19, where we see that the words church and kingdom are

synonymous and are used interchangeably by the Lord Jesus Himself. In verse 18 the Lord said, “I will build my church,” and in verse 19 He said, “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.” Hence, the building of the church is actually the establishing of the kingdom. Furthermore, Paul in the epistles considered the kingdom of God as equivalent to the church (1 Cor. 6:10; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5). How wrong it is to say that the kingdom has been suspended and that it will return at the coming of the Lord! We should not accept this concept concerning the kingdom. We must return to the pure Word which says that the church life is the kingdom of God.

The church is a matter of grace and life, whereas the kingdom is a matter of exercise in this age and discipline in the coming age (Matt. 25:15-30; 1 Cor. 3:13-15). The church, like a human head, has a different appearance when seen from different angles. If you look at the back of my head, you do not see any holes; however, if you look at the front, you will see seven of them. Although the back of my head differs from the front, both are aspects of one entity. It is the same with the church. From one angle we see the church as a matter of grace and life; from another angle we see it as the kingdom of God with exercise and discipline. In the church, on the one hand we enjoy grace and experience life, while on the other hand we undergo a certain amount of exercise.

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In one sense, the church is God’s family, God’s home (Eph. 2:19; 1 Tim. 3:15). In this house we enjoy grace and receive the life supply. In another sense, the church is also the kingdom. What is the meaning of the word kingdom? It means ruling. Many Christians say, “I like to attend the meetings, but I don’t like to be ruled. Whom do those elders think they are? Why must they be in the lead?” On the one hand the church is a family, a home that is

full of grace and life; on the other hand the church is a kingdom, a government to rule. In the church as the kingdom we do have the leadership and the rule under the headship of Christ. This is a matter of exercise. In order to have the church life we need the exercise of the kingdom. Thus, the church is our home and the church is also our kingdom. In our home we have the enjoyment of love, the supply of grace, and the riches of life. In the kingdom we have the rule, the government, the exercise, and the discipline. Praise the Lord for both aspects of the church! I have heard many saints proclaim concerning the church, “Praise the Lord, I am home!” However, we also need to proclaim, “Hallelujah, I am also in the kingdom!”

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Furthermore, Paul says in verse 19, “So let us pursue the things of peace, and things which build one another.” The things of peace are the things that keep the unity of the Body. The things that build up one another are the things that minister life to the members of the Body for the mutual building. We must pursue both categories of things. We have to seek after the things that keep the unity of the Body with peace and the things that minister life to others. In order to do this, we have to leave all the doctrinal concepts behind and overcome all the frustrations that originate from mental knowledge. Satan is subtle. Through all the centuries, he has used and is still using doctrinal concepts and mental knowledge to frustrate the ministry of life and to divide the Body of Christ. Therefore, we must overcome his subtlety by pursuing the things of peace for keeping unity, and the things that minister life to others for the building of the Body.

Verses 20-21 say, “Do not break down the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are clean, but it is evil for a man to eat so as to be a stumbling block. It is good not to eat meat, nor to drink wine, nor to do anything by which your

brother stumbles.” In all saved persons there is an amount of God’s work. God has called and saved them. God has done at least this much divine work in them. If we cause any of the believers to stumble by our doctrinal concepts, we break down, destroy, God’s work of grace in him. We should take care of God’s work, not our doctrinal concepts. All of our religious practices must be cast aside for the sake of God’s work of grace in others. We are free to eat anything and we may do anything that is not sinful, but we should not eat anything or do anything by which a brother stumbles. We must take care of the building of the brothers in life, not the keeping of our religious concepts in knowledge.

In verses 22 and 23 Paul says, “The faith which you have, have it to yourself before God. Blessed is he who does not judge himself in what he approves. But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because it is not out of faith, for all which is not out of faith is sin.” If we are the strong ones in faith, we should have faith to ourselves before God. It is blessed that we do not judge what we approve of doing because we have the faith in doing it. But the weaker ones in faith, who do not have the faith as we do, are condemned if they eat anything about which they have doubts, because they do not eat by faith. All which is not by faith is sin. So, we have to take care of the ones weaker in faith, not causing them to do anything about which they do not have faith.

(Excerpts from Life-study of Romans, Message 29)

Thursday 9/7

Related Verses

Rom. 15:1-4, 5-7

1 But we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those who are weak and not to please ourselves.

2 Let each of us please his neighbor with a view to what is good for building up.

3 For Christ also did not please Himself, but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell upon Me."

4 For the things that were written previously were written for our instruction, in order that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

5 Now the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind toward one another according to Christ Jesus,

6 That with one accord you may with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

7 Therefore receive one another, as Christ also received you to the glory of God.

Related Reading

Romans 15:1 says, “Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those who are weak, and not to please ourselves.” In receiving the believers, we must bear the weaknesses of the weak and not please ourselves. The Lord Jesus always bears the weaknesses of His believers (2 Cor. 12:9) and does not please Himself. In receiving the believers, we have to do the same according to Him, not pleasing ourselves, but bearing others’ weaknesses.

“Let each of us please his neighbor unto what is good for building. For even Christ did not please Himself, but as it is written, The reproaches of those who reproached You fell upon Me” (vv. 2-3). We have to please others that they may be built up in the Body. We do not need to please others for any purpose other than the purpose that they be built up in the Body. For the sake of this purpose, we must pay the price that we may please others. Christ did not please Himself; He pleased the Father by bearing the reproaches which should have fallen upon the Father. Likewise, we should not please ourselves; we should please others by bearing their weaknesses that they may be built up in the Body of Christ.

“For whatever was written before was written for our instruction, that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we may have hope. Now the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus” (vv. 4-5). “Whatever was written” refers to what is quoted in verse 3 concerning Christ and is for the instruction that produces endurance and encouragement with hope. The record concerning Christ in the Scriptures surely is full of instruction. If we receive its instruction, we will be supplied with the endurance and encouragement of Christ that we may have hope. In receiving the believers, we need this kind of endurance and encouragement with hope. In receiving the believers, we need to endure the weaknesses of the ones whom we are going to receive. We also need to be encouraged with the hope that they may improve and be empowered in faith by the Lord’s grace. In receiving the weaker believers, we have to realize that our God is the God of endurance and encouragement who can cause us to endure others’ weaknesses and to be encouraged with what He can do in others by His grace. If we are so encouraged by such a God, we shall be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus, not according to anything else. Since there is only one Christ Jesus, if we are all according to Christ, we shall be likeminded with one another. However, if our mind is in accordance with teachings, concepts, gifts, religious practices, or any other such thing, we shall be divided. The only way to be likeminded toward one another is to be according to Christ. To receive the believers according to our teachings, concepts, gifts, or religious practices does not need any endurance or encouragement with hope. But to receive all believers according to Christ does need an amount of endurance and encouragement with hope which the very God of endurance and encouragement will supply us if we care for the keeping of unity and the building up of the Body.

Friday 9/8

Verse 6 says, “That you may with one accord and with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Some versions say “with one mind and with one mouth.” However, in Greek the word is accord, not mind. Nevertheless, the word accord actually means one mind. We all need to be likeminded. When we are likeminded, we shall be in one accord and shall have one mouth, meaning that we shall have the same concept and the same way of speaking. There will be many believers, but only one mouth. Whenever we have the same mind and are of one accord, we all say the same thing. Therefore, with one mind and one mouth we glorify God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In chapter 9:5 it says that Christ is the over-all and ever-blessed God. That is according to His divinity. But here it speaks of the God of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is according to His humanity. According to His divinity, He is the over-all and ever-blessed God; according to His humanity, God is His God. If, in receiving the believers, we behave ourselves according to the Lord Jesus, we shall glorify God as He does.

Verse 7 says, “Wherefore receive one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.” This verse, when taken along with 14:3, proves that Christ’s receiving is God’s receiving. What Christ has received, God has received. Christ has received us to the glory of God. Our receiving of the believers must be according to God’s and Christ’s receiving, not according to anything else. Whomever God and Christ have received we have to receive, regardless of how much they differ from us in doctrinal concepts or religious practices. This is for the glory of God.

(Excerpts from Life-study of Romans, Message 29)

Related Verses

Rom. 15:16, 18-19, 25-28, 30, 32

16 That I might be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, a laboring priest of the gospel of God, in order that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, having been sanctified in the Holy Spirit.

18 For I will not dare to speak anything of the things which Christ has not accomplished through me for the obedience of the Gentiles, by word and by work,

19 In the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ,

25 But now I am going to Jerusalem, ministering to the saints.

26 For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.

27 For they were pleased to do it, and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they ought also to do service to them in material things.

28 When therefore I have finished this and have sealed to them this fruit, I will go on by way of you to Spain.

30 Now I exhort you, brothers, through our Lord Jesus Christ and through the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf,

32 So that coming to you in joy through the will of God, I may refresh myself and rest with you.

Related Reading

We need to read 15:16. “That I should be a minister of Christ Jesus to the nations, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, that the offering of the nations might be acceptable, having been sanctified in the Holy Spirit.” Paul was a minister of Christ, a public servant serving people with Christ,

ministering Christ into the Gentile believers. He was like a waiter serving people at the dining table with delicious food. Paul was a waiter at the universal dining table, serving people with Christ. All the people at this dining table were filled with Christ, and Christ became the transforming element within their being. Thus, the Gentiles were transformed with the essence of the wonderful, all-inclusive Christ, who is the life-giving Spirit. Moreover, this verse reveals that Paul was a priest, for he was “ministering as a priest the gospel of God.” As a priest he offered to God the believing Gentiles as a sweet sacrifice for His satisfaction. The very Gentiles whom he served with Christ he presented to God as an offering.

The offering of the nations was made possible through the wide-spread preaching of the gospel (15:18-23). In 15:19 Paul says that “from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.” During Paul’s time, Illyricum was a remote region on the northeastern corner of Europe. Paul preached the gospel from Jerusalem, a cultured city, to a remote, uncultured region. Furthermore, he desired to travel all the way to Spain (v. 24).

Our preaching of the gospel must be uplifted. Our gospel should not be a kind of heaven-going gospel; it must be a gospel which ministers Christ to people. We need to minister Christ to people that they may be sanctified and transformed with the very essence of Christ and thereby become an offering to God. Whenever and wherever the church preaches the gospel, we must do it with the conviction that we are ministering Christ to people, that we are serving Christ as food for hungry sinners. We must minister Christ to them in order that Christ might become within them the sanctifying element to change their very being.

In 15:16 Paul says that “the offering of the nations might be acceptable, having been sanctified

in the Holy Spirit.” To be sanctified means to be separated, to be made holy with transformation in life. Paul considers the Gentile believers as a sweet offering to God. Once they were unclean and defiled people, but now they are sanctified and have become an offering pleasing to God. They have been transformed and conformed to the image of God and thus are fully acceptable to Him. This was the result of Paul’s ministering Christ into the Gentiles. When Christ was wrought into them, becoming their very element, the Gentiles became a corporate offering to God, an offering that had been saturated with Christ and permeated with His divine essence. Hence, they were presented to God for His satisfaction.

Out of the ministering of Christ to the nations and the offering of them as a sacrifice to God, developed the fellowship of love, the communication in love between the Gentile and Jewish saints (15:25-28, 30, 32). The Gentile saints communicated with the Jewish saints by the means of giving practical, material things. Formerly, in the eyes of the Jews, the Gentiles were swine; now they have become saints, a fragrant offering to God. Thus, the Gentile believers had it in their heart to care for the material needs of their Jewish brothers and they offered their own possessions as the expression of their desire to take care of the needs of the saints in Judea. When the Apostle Paul came to the Gentiles, he came with Christ and ministered Christ into them. When he returned from them to Judea, he returned with material possessions for the needy saints. Paul came with Christ and returned with material possessions of the saints’ love. This was the result of Paul’s ministry.

The spirituality of many Christians today is too impractical. They say, “I am for Christ and I will bring Christ everywhere, but I don’t care for money or for material possessions.” If you say this, it may mean that your spirituality is impractical. Consider the example of the Apostle Paul. He went to Achaia

and Macedonia, ministering Christ to the people. What was the outcome of this? The outcome was that the Gentile believers contributed their own material possessions to care for their ex-enemies, their Jewish brothers in Christ. After the Gentiles had been converted, regenerated, sanctified, and transformed, their old heart had been removed and a new heart had been implanted, a heart of concern for their Jewish brothers. They expressed this concern in a practical way by giving material things. They did not say, “Paul, we stand with you, we go with you, and our prayer follows you. Send our greetings to the dear saints in the Holy Land.” Paul exemplified the practical church life by going with Christ and returning with material possessions. This is the genuine communication in love and practical expression of concern.

We have seen Paul’s relationship with two parties: with the Gentiles, to whom he ministered Christ, and with the Jews, to whom he brought material possessions. However, 15:29 unfolds Paul’s relationship with a third party: the believers in Rome whom he hoped to see on his way to Spain. In this verse we see how Paul expected to come to the saints in Rome. “And I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.” Paul did not say this in any other epistle. Paul went to the Gentiles with Christ, returned to the Jewish brothers with material possessions, and expected to visit Rome in the fullness of the blessing of Christ. This is the church life. The church life is being filled up with Christ, filled with love in the communication of material possessions, and filled with the fullness of the blessing of Christ. I expect to see in all the churches in the Lord’s recovery that Christ is ministered to people everywhere, that these people will respond with sincerity and love in their material possessions, and that there will also be the mutual participation in the fullness of the blessing of Christ. We should not be those who share doctrinal truths wherever we

go. Wherever we go we must go with the fullness of the blessing of Christ. However, before we can go with the blessing of Christ, we must first experience it ourselves. Paul could go anywhere to share the fullness of the blessing of Christ because he had the full experience of it. As we travel among the churches, let us not take with us doctrines and gifts, but the fullness of the blessing of Christ. It is not only a matter of giving material things, although such communication is a true expression of the reality of Christ. If we have the reality of Christ, we shall pour ourselves out as an expression of our love toward the needy saints. Paul was very wise, giving us a picture of the proper practice of the church life in experience, not in doctrine. With Paul we see the experience of all the riches of Christ. When he came to people with the fullness of the blessing of Christ, it meant that he came to them ministering all the riches of Christ.

(Excerpts from Life-study of Romans, Message 30)

Saturday 9/9

Related Verses

Rom.16:1-5a, 23a,20,25-27

- 1 I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a deaconess of the church which is in Cenchrea,
- 2 That you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints and assist her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been the patroness of many, of myself as well.
- 3 Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus,
- 4 Who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles;
- 5a And greet the church, which is in their house.
- 23a Gaius, my host and host of the whole church, greets you.
- 20 Now the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

25 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel, that is, the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which has been kept in silence in the times of the ages

26 But has now been manifested, and through the prophetic writings, according to the command of the eternal God, has been made known to all the Gentiles for the obedience of faith;

27 To the only wise God through Jesus Christ, to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Related Reading

In summary, we may list these five aspects of the church life: serving the church; risking our lives for the church; having the church in our home; never considering the church as anyone's church, but acknowledging that it is the church of Christ; extending hospitality to everyone in the church and being a host to all the churches. In his greetings recorded in Romans 16, Paul unveiled the crucial indicators of the proper church life both in a particular local church and among the churches. His greetings also underscore the qualities of many of the dear saints. Thus, in Romans 16 we see the churches in localities and the details of the genuine church life expressed in the attributes and virtues of so many saints. This is a complete portrait of the ancient church life. Once again I say that in Romans we do not find the doctrine of the church; we behold the practicality of the church life. Hence, the ultimate consummation of the gospel is the church life.

What a great contrast there is between Romans 1 and 16. In chapter one we see sinners, people that are evil, unclean, and condemned; in chapter sixteen we see the churches that are holy and glorious. There is no comparison. How did vile sinners become glorious churches? Through the lengthy process revealed from chapter one through chapter sixteen, the process of redemption, justification,

sanctification, glorification, selection, and transformation. As a result of a long process sinners have become glorious churches, churches that are holy and yet so practical.

After the greeting which shows the fellowship of concern among the saints and between the churches, the Apostle declared that the God of peace would crush Satan, and would crush him soon under the feet of the saints who are in the church life (16:20). This indicates that the crushing of Satan by God is related to the church life. If we are not in the church and do not practice the church life, it will be difficult for us to have Satan crushed under our feet by God. The church life is the strongest means by which God overcomes Satan. Whenever we are separated from the church, we become a prey for Satan, for it is difficult for us to fight Satan individually. But, praise the Lord, that when we are in the church and are one with the Body, Satan is under our feet, and we enjoy God as the God of peace in the church life. We experience and participate in the peace of God by our victory over the troublemaker, Satan. As long as Satan, the troublemaker, is not under our feet, it will be difficult for us to have peace. When he is crushed under our feet in the church life, we have the peace of God as a token of our victory over him. So, both the crushing of Satan and the peace of God are experienced in the church life.

Following his declaration that God will crush Satan under the feet of the church people, the Apostle gives his blessing to them, saying that the grace of the Lord Jesus would be with them (16:20). This indicates that it is in the church life that the grace of the Lord Jesus is dispensed to all the saints. A great many believers miss this grace because they are separate from the church life. We all can testify that we have a rich enjoyment of the Lord's grace when we are living in the churches and practicing the Body life with all the saints. The church is the place where the Lord dispenses His grace and

where we may partake of it. The church is not only the place where we have Satan crushed under our feet and experience the God of peace, but also the place where we enjoy the rich grace of the Lord.

Let us read 16:25-27. "Now to Him Who is of power to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which has been kept in silence in times of the ages, but now has been manifested, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the command of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations unto obedience of faith, to the only wise God through Jesus Christ be the glory forever and ever! Amen." This concluding praise is like a melody. Paul refers to God as the One who has "power to establish you." In Romans 16 our need is no longer salvation or sanctification; our need is to be established. Everything has been accomplished, and we only need to be established. We are not established according to doctrines or dispensational truths, but according to the gospel, the preaching of Christ, and the revelation of the mystery. Oh, how the saints today need to be rescued from the divisive doctrines and dividing practices and to be established by the pure and full gospel of God, by the preaching and ministering of the living and all-inclusive Christ, and by the revelation of God's mystery! Only the pure gospel, the living Christ, and God's revealed mystery can establish us and keep us in unity for the church life.

This mystery, which has been kept in silence in the times of the ages, and has now been revealed, is mainly of two aspects: one is the mystery of God (Col. 2:2 ASV), which is Christ, who is in the believers (Col. 1:26-27) as their life and their everything that they may become the members of His Body; another is the mystery of Christ (Eph. 3:4-6), which is the church as His Body to express His fullness (Eph. 1:22-23). Therefore, Christ and the church are the great mystery (Eph. 5:32).

Romans firstly tells us how the believers have been baptized into Christ (6:3), how Christ has been wrought into the believers (8:10), and how the believers have put on Christ (13:14). Then it reveals how all these believers are built together into one Body (12:4-5) to express Christ. Thus the churches have come into existence in many cities in a local and practical way, with all the saints loving one another and fellowshiping with one another among all the churches to express the Body of Christ for the fulfillment of God's mystery. This is the ultimate consummation of the full gospel of God. It is through this that Satan is crushed under the feet of the saints (16:20), that the grace of Christ is dispensed to all the saints (16:20), and that the glory is and will be to God unto the ages of the ages (16:27). The eternal God has made known this mystery to all the nations unto obedience of faith.

In Romans 15 and 16 God is called the God of endurance and encouragement (15:5), the God of hope (15:13), the God of peace (16:20), the eternal God (16:26), and the only wise God (16:27). Our God is a rich God in many aspects—in endurance, encouragement, hope, peace, wisdom, and being eternal—and the gospel in Romans is the gospel of such a rich God. The gospel of such a rich God consummates in the practical church life. Hallelujah!

(Excerpts from Life-study of Romans, Message 30)

Lord's Day 9/10

Related Verses

1 Cor. 12:12-14, 18, 23-27

12 For even as the body is one and has many members, yet all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ.

13 For also in one Spirit we were all baptized into one Body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and were all given to drink one Spirit.

14 For the body is not one member but many.

18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, even as He willed.

23 And those members of the body which we consider to be less honorable, these we clothe with more abundant honor; and our uncomely members come to have more abundant comeliness,

24 But our comely members have no need. But God has blended the body together, giving more abundant honor to the member that lacked,

25 That there would be no division in the body, but that the members would have the same care for one another.

26 And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member is glorified, all the members rejoice with it.

27 Now you are the Body of Christ, and members individually.

Hymns, #847

1 I long for fellowship in spirit,
That mingled with the saints I'll be,
Long to be saved from independence
And to be built with saints in Thee.

2 I long for fellowship in spirit,
That opened shall my spirit be,
Long to be rescued from seclusion,
And with the saints to worship Thee.

3 I long for fellowship in spirit,
Long that my spirit forth may come,
Long to be saved from self-deception,
And every hindrance overcome.

4 I long for fellowship in spirit,
With saints in spirit thus to pray,
Long for deliv'rance from pretention,
Long for true fellowship today.

5 I long for fellowship in spirit,
Long thus to know authority;
Long for true fellowship in service,
Coordinated thus to be.

6 O Lord, fulfill our hearts deep longing,
Saints for such fellowship inspire,
That we may realize Thy building
And soon fulfill Thy heart's desire.

Churchwide Truth Pursuit of Romans

Level 1—Romans Sequential Study

Scripture: Rom. 5:1-11

Assigned Reading: *Life-study of Romans*, msg. 39

Level 2—Romans Topical Study

Crucial Point: The Selection, Predestination, and Mercy of God

Scripture: Rom. 9:1-18

Assigned Reading: *Life-study of Romans*, msg. 22, 58

Supplemental Reading: None

Hymn: 25

For study questions and additional materials, please visit the church website at churchinnyc.org/bible-study