

# THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

God's solid foundation stands firm. 2 Timothy 2:19

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Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel,  
but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in  
the house.

Matthew 5:15

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For A Conservative Anabaptist Perspective

**From The Editor's Desk**

And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' Mark 12:30 <sup>(ESV)</sup>

No doubt many of us have read this verse many times, it was also God's call to Israel of old, Deuteronomy 6:5, but how do we see this and apply it to our lives today? Is it realistic to totally surrender our whole being to the Lord your God? Yes it is, our eternal destiny depends on it. Jesus call to us is in these words, If any man would come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me, Matthew 16:24, these words encompass his direction in Mark 12:30, our opening verse.

George MacDonald, 1824-1905, explained it this way;

"We must become as little children, and Christ must be born in us. We must learn of him, and see things as He saw them, regard them as He regarded them. We must take the will of God is the very life of our being – the world must be to us as nothing.

I would not be misunderstood if I may avoid it. When I say *the world*, I do not mean the physical world as God makes it and means it, by *the world* I mean always of judging, regarding, and thinking, whether political, economic, ecclesiastical, social, or individual, which are not divine, which are not God's way of thinking and regarding.

I mean all ways of thinking which did not take God into account and do not set his world supreme as the one only law of life. I mean always thinking which do not care for the truth of things but exalt the customs of society and its practices.

Turning our backs on *the world* in this sense, learning to see and think and respond as God does is the beginning of self-denial. From everything that is against the teaching and thinking of Jesus, from the world in the heart of the best man in it and especially from the world in his own heart, the disciple must turn to follow him.

The first thing in all progress is to leave something behind.

To follow Him is to leave one's self behind."

*Used by permission from "Your Life in Christ" George MacDonald, edited by Michael Phillips.*

Reading through and meditating on the words of Scripture and those written by MacDonald we can see that the words of Jesus in Mark 12:30 are a call to a full and complete life in total surrender to Christ. J.V.L



### *From the Pulpit*

## Changed Minds – Changed Lives

*Part 4 of 4 on the Book of Romans*

*Linford Berry - 2014*

Please open your Bibles to Romans 12 and journey with me today, surfing across the tops of the waves in Romans chapters 12 through 16, you will need to follow along in your copies of the Scripture in order that we can together see across the ocean and discover God's riches and his truth.

I invite you to stand and read your Bible as we recite a couple of key pieces of this section, and then we're all going to read together the doxology at the end of chapter 16.

Firstly [Romans 13:8-10](#) Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.<sup>9</sup> For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."<sup>10</sup> Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Now [Romans 15:1-7](#) We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves.<sup>2</sup> Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.<sup>3</sup> For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me."<sup>4</sup> For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.<sup>5</sup> May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus,<sup>6</sup> that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>7</sup> Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

And [Romans 15:30-33](#) I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf,<sup>31</sup> that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea,

and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints,<sup>32</sup> so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company.<sup>33</sup> May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

Next is [Romans 16:17-20](#) I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.<sup>18</sup> For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.<sup>19</sup> For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil.<sup>20</sup> The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

And lastly let us read together verses 25 to 27.

[Romans 16:25-27](#) "Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages<sup>26</sup> but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—<sup>27</sup> to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen."

Amen, and may God bless the reading of his word, you may be seated.

Romans 12 begins a new section in this book continuing through to the end of the book, in this section Paul takes the propositional truth that we find in chapters 1 through 11 and begins to issue imperatives or commands.

We often call these things applications, things to do. How does the truth of God apply to our daily lives?

Now this is an important and necessary consideration. But one thing that we must never forget is that applications or imperatives and commands, flow out of truth not the other way around, so we have to have a life that flows out of what is true and right and good.

We do not just do right and good without it being sourced from what is true.

The application of Romans chapters 12 through 16 grows out of Romans 1 to 11, you cannot take one without the other, we must take them in their

proper order, one comes first, the propositional truths of Romans 1 to 11 must come first. But this application that we find here comes out in a more general way than we might expect, you see many of us are kind of bottom-line people, we take a financial statement we look at it and go straight to the bottom line, that's what's really important.

Many of us are a kind of "get to the point" people okay, and so we want to see a direct and immediate connection from the doctrine to the application and in preaching many times there is a tendency, indeed almost a necessity, to seek to find the meaning of a text and then directly drive home its application, of course it helps if it is very immediate and earthshaking and relevant to our lives. That's what we want.

And there are times when that should happen and what can happen but there are many other times when that is neither possible nor desirable.

Now we look for the practical applications of Scripture, indeed we demand them, because we want to be shown that these truths are practical and relevant to us today but the relevance and applicability of God's Word is not always that quick, it is not always that apparent.

Let me give you an analogy here, as we look at Romans 1 to 11 we can see it as something like a stew, now you never thought that I would talk about the word of God like a stew did you, but let me say it to you this way:

So Paul here he keeps adding in stuff to the stew, all right, one truth after another and yes they are all related because they are in the same stew okay, but he adds the carrots and the celery and the potatoes and some meat and it is all put into this stew and he doesn't just make a direct connection or direct application directly from the carrots to application or directly from the celery to the application, no he doesn't, he makes application from the stew to our lives, it is this stew that feeds us.

Now yes there are some juicy carrots in there and some crisp celery and some savoury meat and we delight in those things but we delight in them in the context of the whole stew.

The importance of this is especially evident when we recall that some of the truths which Paul taught in Romans 1 to 11 seem, at least on the sur-

face, to be contradictory, so how are we going to deal with this in terms of application?

Paul taught the grace of God but he also taught that the law is in effect, what are we can do with that, how are we to apply that?

Paul teaches the sovereignty of God both in salvation and in providence but he also teaches the responsibility of man.

If we attempt to link each doctrine directly with an application we may very well fall into the trap of emphasising only one element of truth rather than the sum total of truth, that is why we have to have the stew.

And so Paul's applications are based upon the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man.

Paul's applications are based on grace and the law.

Paul's applications are based upon God's work in salvation and upon our striving in salvation.

Indeed even in this section of Romans 12 and onward of more direct application the apostle Paul is going to be saying things that on the surface seem to be contradictory. So for example Romans 14:10 says don't pass judgement on your brother.

Romans 16:17 watch out for those who create divisions and obstacles, avoid them.

Sounds like judging to me.

You see we have to take it all together we can't just pick one little piece out and make an extrapolation from that, we must take the word of God as a whole, we must apply every principle in every passage in view to what the whole text says.

And perhaps Romans 12:1-2 here illustrate this better than anything else:

**Romans 12:1-2** "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

This very famous text most of us have heard many times, I would say that this text has probably been misused, it has been abused and some of us have some kind of cringe factor that happens whenever this text is read.

This is a very powerful text it is very beautiful, it is very pertinent, what this text basically says to us is that the scriptures are not given to us to throw out all the rules, the scriptures are not given to us as a set of rules to rigidly follow.

The Bible, God's truth, is given to us so that we might have our minds transformed and renewed, the Bible is not given to us merely to provide us with a list of practices to do or a list of sins to avoid, the Bible is given to us to provide us with more than just a series of principles, as important as those are.

The Bible is given to us, God's truth is given to us to change our perspective, to change the way we think, to transfer all our way of seeing things so that we can see life in ourselves from God's perspective.

This new perspective, this new point of view I believe is what he is talking about when he talks about the renewed mind here in Romans 12 verse 2, this new perspective that aligns with God's perspective, this is the basis for the transformed life.

And so it is that there is not always a direct line between a particular teaching or doctrine and a certain application, biblical truth is not necessarily to be understood that way in isolation but in context, in the context of the whole of God's word and in the context of our own lives.

So if you do not come away from this message today with a concrete area of application that's okay, that's fine, it doesn't bother me at all, I would hope however that our study of the book of the entire book of Romans would change your perspective significantly and it would change the way you think about yourself, the way you think about God, the way you think about the world in which you live so that when you do live in this world you live differently, when you do think you think differently from the world that you live in and differently from what you formerly practised or thought.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves here, let me show you the basic outline of these last 5 chapters and then we will come back and dive in a little deeper at a few spots.

So first of all chapters 12 and 13 fit together and these chapters open with a call to surrender our bodies and the call to the transformation of our mind, then we have this explanation, this demonstration of how that works out in our daily lives in chapters 12 and 13.

Paul says here in Romans 12:1 that we are to present our bodies as a sacrifice because of and by the power of the mercies of God. Now what are the mercies of God?

Well that's what he has just been talking and writing to us about in the first 11 chapters of Romans, this is the Gospel, this is the way God works in the world and in our hearts, the mercies of God, and it is because of this and by this that we are to surrender our bodies as a living sacrifice.

These mercies of God empower and command the obedience of the faith, the apostle Paul references that term at least 3 times in this book in chapter 1 and in chapter 10 and again at the end of chapter 16 this call to the obedience of the faith.

This Gospel, these mercies of God require and demand a response, a response unto obedience.

This Gospel, this faith, these mercies of God must result in a changed way of life, we must put off the sinful selfish way of living, the way of the flesh, the way our world goes we must put off, we must be renewed in our thinking so that we can live in ways that are according to the Gospel, that are according to the glory of God.

Chapters 12 and 13 give us some specific examples and commands for what this looks like in real life. The end of chapter 13 then wraps this up with a reminder that time is running out, so get up and cast off the works of darkness, put on the armour of light, put off our sinful self, our sinful fleshly desires and actions and put on the Lord Jesus Christ. These are commands, these are imperatives.

Then the 2<sup>nd</sup> section here is in chapter 14 through chapter 15 verse 13.

This deals specifically with how we relate together as brothers and sister in the family of God, in the local church, and the context is especially areas where we disagree, areas where we have differences of opinion about how the Christian life ought to be lived out and this of course is a continuation of the theme of living according to God's truth by a changed or renewed mind versus thinking and behaving like the world does.

The goal here in these verses is not just unity with God and obedience to God as individuals, the goal here is how we live together in harmony and unity in such a way that we live out the Gospel together.

Then the 3<sup>rd</sup> and final section from chapter 15 verse 14 to the end of chapter 16 is Paul's commendation, first of himself to the saints in Rome, and then his commendation of the saints in Rome, he then gives us some final instructions about what to do with people who are divisive, who are heretics, and then this beautiful doxology, which we read together, and that doxology sums up the main point of the book of Romans, the whole book.

So now let's go back to chapter 12 and dig in a little bit, we will spend most of our time in 2 areas this morning first in Romans 12:1-2 and then we will look at Romans 14 and 15.

Now these 2 verses here, Romans 12:1-2, they are as I said the key verses here, the key to understanding the rest of this book, they serve as a bridge between the glorious propositional truths of the Gospel and the way this gets lived out in the real world and so we see the appeal that Paul makes here, I appeal to you, therefore, brothers and sisters, I appeal to you by the mercies of God to do this.

You see the Gospel is all about the grace and power of God, yes, it's all about the power of God on our behalf, but the Gospel is not a passive thing, the Gospel is not something that is done to us, the Gospel is done in us, the Gospel is an active work of God in us.

Now as I said at the close of the last sermon from Romans chapters 9 to 11 God must always act first in our salvation, He must take the initiative, apart from God's initiative, his initiative of mercy, his initiative of grace and love, apart from that none of us would be saved but for God's initiative, God's work in salvation demands a response on our part and this is what Paul is talking about when he talks about the obedience of faith, Paul refers to it a number of times that God's salvation demands a response.

But how does this work or rather how does God work in us and how do we work out our salvation with fear and trembling?

Well these 2 verses right here in Romans 12:1-2, tell us how this is, it says by the mercy and grace of God we surrender our body to him and for his use, living sacrifices, we give up our rights, we surrender to God.

The Bible talks about this in terms of repentance, repentance and faith, and repentance is the surrender, the giving up, the changing of our mind, the changing of our direction from our sin and ourselves to God and then we go about living in a way that conforms to God's way of thinking instead of the world's way of thinking and this change from living according to the world's way of thinking and living according to God's way of thinking this change happens through the renewal of our mind.

The key here is our mind, it is the key to the Christian life.

That's why non-Christians do not respond to Christian truth because as it says in first Corinthians 2 they cannot discern it but for the believer the mind is the key area where this happens.

As I said the word repentance carries the notion of a change of mind, our thinking, our minds must be changed from old ungodly ways of thinking to new godly ways of thinking. Our minds must be renewed, our thinking must be changed if our lives are going to change.

Now interestingly enough modern science has come to some of the same conclusions about this, they have found that repeated thoughts and repeated patterns of thinking actually change the cellular structure of our brains and so it is like ruts in the road if you drive down a muddy road a certain number of times it is kind of hard to get out of the rut. And so our mind, through our patterns of thinking, establishes these ruts and these ruts are identifiable through brain scans.

At Harvard University they did a study where they took 3 groups of people none of which could play the piano and they put one group in a room with a piano and an instructor and for 5 days they learned how to play a piano.

They put a 2<sup>nd</sup> group into a room with a piano but that group did not have anything to do with the piano, they didn't learn to play it, they didn't think about playing it, the piano was just sitting there with the people in the room also but that was it. The 3<sup>rd</sup> group they put in a room with a piano and told these people to imagine that they are playing the piano, imagine that they are learning how to play the piano.

At the end of 5 days they took these groups of people and did brain scans on them and found that the first group, the ones that had been taught how to play the piano, their brains had changed and the areas of their brains that had changed the most were the areas that related to the movement of their fingers and their coordination with their hands.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> group, those that were in the room with the piano but had nothing to do with the piano, their brains showed no change whatsoever.

But the most surprising result was the 3<sup>rd</sup> group, the ones who had imagined they were playing the piano, the brain scans of those people showed almost the same changes as the people who actually played the piano.

Now our world knows this in various ways, we ought to know it better than they, and our world has a way of dealing with this, our world says think positive, think positive thoughts that's how you fix your problems that is how you change your world you think positive thoughts but it is all up to you.

The Bible tells us something different, the Bible's way of thinking about thinking is different than the world's way of thinking about thinking, the Bible says that the word of God and the Spirit of God will change our thinking.

So we find this in Titus 3 where it says but when the goodness and the lovingkindness of God our Saviour appeared He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy. How did He do this? Listen – by the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit whom He poured out upon us eventually through Christ Jesus our Saviour so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

So where the world thinks that they must just think positive the Christian thinks I must think God's thoughts, I must depend on God for his truth, for his Spirit to renew my mind. So remember this if you forget everything else, the bottom line is that in our daily struggle against sin, which we all must be engaged in if we are going to be obedient to the faith, in our daily struggle against sin the battle is won or lost in our minds not in our physical bodies.

If you want your behaviour to change then the way you think must change and it must change first, the only way you will be able to live a godly life is if you think godly thoughts and that means that you must be careful about the kind of things that you think about, and you must be intentional about filling your mind with God thoughts. Philippians chapter 2 says, have this mind in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.

We are called to have a mind that is patterned after Christ. And what kind of mind was that? Well it says in Philippians 2 it was a mind that considered himself as nothing, considered himself humbly, became obedient to the Father even to the point of death on the cross.

So if you want to have a Christian mind instead of a worldly mind the first thing you have to do is think rightly about yourself and rightly about God in terms of obedience.

As we move on in chapter 12 from verse 3 and on we see this is where the apostle Paul goes immediately after he has told us how this change must happen through the renewal of our mind and how because of that now, he says, for by the grace given to me I say to every one among you don't think more highly of yourself than you ought to think, think soberly, think with right judgement and think about this according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

Remember what do you have that you were not given? And who gave it to you?

We are dependent on God.

And so as we think rightly and humbly and obediently about ourselves and our relationship to the Father then we begin to live in these kinds of ways and we have here the gifts of the Spirit that are lived out in zeal and in generosity and then we have these marks of the true Christian.

What does this look like in real life?

And we have things that really seem backwards to us in a natural way of thinking, bless those who persecute you? Who are you kidding! Love your enemies, don't get revenge when somebody has wronged you? What is this, what's up with this?

Ah, you see this is the way the Christian thinks, this is not the way the world thinks, no it is not, it is different. The Christian says vengeance is

God's, God will settle the score because I know God and God is a God of truth and God is a God of righteousness and holiness, He will not let this go unchecked, He will not let the score go unsettled.

But the world does not know that God so the world takes matters into their own hands, the world doesn't like to submit to authorities as we read about in chapter 13 this is not the world's way.

But the Christian says all authority is from God and so I joyfully submit to it even when it seems counter intuitive to my selfish way.

And Paul follows that commentary in verses 8 to 10 that we read earlier about the fact that love is the fulfilment of the Law, it is really what God is after in the Law, it is really what God is after as we reflect his Gospel in our lives, God is after this, this fulfilment of the 10 Commandments and it happens by love, loving each other and loving God.

Then in chapters 14 and 15 we have this kind of test case for us about how this is going to work out in some very pertinent and practical ways as it relates especially now to how we relate to each other in the church.

You see we can talk about loving our enemies, we can talk about blessing those who persecute us but that is harder when it gets closer to home, it is harder when it gets right here in our church with people who we know are supposed to be godlike in their thinking and godlike in their behaviour and yet we have these disagreements, we have these issues.

And once again it is very clear that the way we are expected to think and the way we are expected to act is counter to the way our world thinks and acts.

You see it is easy for us to stand in judgement of each other, that's the natural thing to do to stand in judgement of each other, especially when we see that someone is living in a way that is different than the way we think Christians should live.

This was a significant issue in the Roman church and I think it is a significant issue for us here or at your church, this is where we are at and I'm sure this text deserves a sermon all to itself and hopefully we will get there in time, but let me just make a few summary statements based on what the apostle Paul writes in these chapters, and if you don't like it you could throw me out afterwards, but I'm going to do as the apostle Paul states in Romans 15:15, I'm going to be bold, I'm going to tell you some stuff you need to hear, okay, so don't shoot the messenger, this is the word of God.

I think that we have some of the same dynamics here at Calvary that the Roman church had.

Now think with me about this, we have a group of people here who have grown up in religious communities that had fairly highly defined and regulated codes of ethics and behaviour and this is not unlike what the Jewish Christians in Rome would have experienced.

At the same time we also have a group of people here who did not grow up in that religious culture at all and the Gentile believers in Rome didn't either.

And then most likely we have some people here who rebelled against that religious culture, who rebelled against that code of ethics and behaviour and who think that they have found freedom in Christ and I imagine there were some converted Jews in Rome who fell into this category as well.

Now it is fairly easy for any of these 3 groups to take offence or to be offended by another group, it is actually quite natural for us, there is a reason why ethnic groups and cultural groups band together, there is a reason birds of a feather flock together, we like to be with people who are like us, people who think like us, people who behave like us, that is where we are comfortable and when somebody kinds of cuts across that boundary it is easy for us to misunderstand, it is easy for us to take offence, it is easy for us to offend because we don't understand where they come from, how they think and how they see the world.

And so again the command of Scripture is to think like God thinks, to subject ourselves and our thinking to His way of thinking and this is how true unity in the church can come about.

But it is natural for us when we face these kinds of differences to point fingers, to accuse those who seem to be in disagreement with us, this is the way the world works but it is not the way Christ wants his Church to work. Instead this is what he says, in chapter 14, you're first of all to realise that we will all be held accountable for our own actions. The first thing we need to know is that you are accountable to God for your own actions, that's the first thing you need to get straight, okay, each of us will give account for ourselves before God, that is where our chief concern must lie.

Secondly we must work hard to understand the motives of those whom we disagree with.

You see what is important in God's economy is not always what is important in our economy, Paul is very clear here what is important to God is that we honour God. None of us lives to himself, none of us dies to himself, if we live with live to the Lord, if we die we die to the Lord so then whether we live or whether we die we are the Lord's.

So we must be about that and it says later on in chapter 14 that it is for God and his glory that we must live.

First Corinthians chapter 11, whether you eat or whether you drink or whatever you do, do all to the honour and glory of God.

That must be our motive. So as we see other people who don't seem to be doing Christianity the way we do it we must work hard to understand their motives why are they doing what they are doing?

It may be that they are doing it out of honour to God, it may be that they are not, but we need to try and understand, we need to call people to what is most important in God's economy.

And let's be honest this looks different for different people in different places at different times, let's be careful when we assign motive.

Thirdly we must be very careful not to offend or cause a brother or sister to stumble even if we ourselves are free to do whatever it is, if it will offend our brother then we must sacrifice and do what is good for our brother. The apostle Paul says this in chapter 14 verse 16 don't let what you think is good and right become something evil because by doing that you cause a brother to stumble rather, rather than criticising, rather than accusing let us work together for mutual up-building and peace.

Now this is hard work I'm telling you, this is difficult, this isn't going to be easy. The easy way is to take the world's way of thinking, the easy way out, the way with least resistance.

But God's way is different, God's way is harder but God's way has different and better results.

And it says here rather than criticising and accusing each other let us work for mutual up-building and peace and the apostle is very honest in chapters 15 verse 4 and 5, this is going to take some patience, this is going to take some endurance, this is going to take the encouragement of the Scripture.

He says therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, in verse 7.

Let me ask you, How did Christ welcome you? How does Christ welcome you into the family of God, into the Church of God? Did He wait until you were perfect before He welcomed you? No! No!

Remember Romans chapter 5 says for while we were yet sinners, while we were ungodly, Christ died for you. So we are to welcome one another as Christ has welcomed us for the glory of God.

So how is this going to work in our assembly?

Well first of all let me tell you how the worldly way is, the worldly way of thinking is we see someone living in a way we disagree with and so we talk about them to other people and we say, did you see so-and-so, did you see what they were wearing, did you see what they were doing?

We talk about them to other people, we malign their character, we assign motives, we keep our distance from them, we might even go to those in authority and accuse them and say do something about this person!

That's not God's way, that's the worldly way. God's way is when we see someone whom we think is not living out the Christians life the way we think it should be lived we do what Christ did, we love on them. That's what it says here, we love on them. We don't go around behind their back and accuse them, we don't talk about them, no, we go and we love on them.

Now some of you don't know what "love on them means" you love on them means that in a self-sacrificing way you serve them, you love them like Christ loved us, you pour your life into them, you invest in them, you get close to them, you try to understand where they are coming from, how they think, how they see the world, how they see themselves. And through all of this and after all of this and in all of this we speak to the issues in a way that builds up rather than tears down, in a way that brings peace rather than division.

That's the kind of church the Romans needed to be and that is the kind of church we need to be.

Now in conclusion Paul goes on in the last part of chapter 15 to commend himself to the saints at Rome to ask for their participation in his work as an apostle and especially an apostle to the Gentiles.

Now I think he might have been rubbing it in here a little, okay, because there are probably some Jewish Christians in Rome who didn't think too highly of the Gentiles, that's part of this whole problem he has just been talking about it in chapters 14 and 15, and now he says I plead with you, I urge you participate with me in this ministry to the Gentiles, and he talks about how he is planning to stop off in Rome on his way to Spain, he anticipates visiting with the church in Rome and he wants and asks them to strive together with him in their prayers to God so that his travel will be safe and successful.

Now they didn't know, and the apostle Paul might not have known, but God surely did, how the apostle Paul would actually come to Rome as a prisoner of Caesar and how he would live there and spend a lot of time there, but that was yet to be and this is now.

Then Paul in this very weighty letter takes up 16 verses in chapter 16 and he just gives commendation of the saints in Rome to the saints in Rome.

And you say well what is so significant about that?

Well I don't know for sure but I think if I read this right some of these names are Jewish names and some of them are certainly Gentile names, the apostle Paul is writing this personal letter to a church and in this church are saints, people of God, who are struggling to get along, people who are struggling to be unified because of their differences in upbringing and cultural expectations, some of these people have walked with the apostle Paul in Ministry and served with him, and he is writing this letter urging the church to honour those who faithfully served regardless of their ethnic background, regardless of whether they are men or women, regardless of their stature in society.

Now I'm not totally sure, of all the names which are Jewish and which are Gentile, but the point is Paul is calling them out on their antics and he is saying, he is urging them, to see the value and benefit in their brothers and sisters, in the work of God in the life of the church even when they don't belong to our culture.

Then in verse 17, so that they and we wouldn't be mistaken about the way we are to relate to those with whom we differ, he makes one final appeal in verse 17, watch out for those who cause divisions.

Now the word divisions here is the word sometimes translated heretic, if a person insists on being divisive, if a person insists on teaching doctrine contrary to God's revealed truth, if a person will not act in love and grace toward other Christians then the apostle Paul says avoid them have nothing to do with them for that's a heretic.

That is different to what he was talking about in other chapters where there is a difference of opinion about how you live out the truth of the Gospel how you live out the revealed word of God.

Here is a person who doesn't want to be united, here is a person who doesn't want to build up in love and peace and grace, here is a person who doesn't want to think God's thoughts, it says here that this person they are all about their own appetites, they are all about what they want.

And again that's a worldly way of thinking and it is contrary to the way of Christ, the way of Christ says I give, I serve, I sacrifice, I don't look out for myself but for my brother and sister.

And so we are very clearly to separate from those who do not think God's thoughts, who do not think in a way that is transformed, but we are to give grace, all manner of grace, and love and care to those whom God has called to be his people, to those we have disagreements with in matters of opinion of how we should live out this Christians life.

But if, if they will not hear, if they will not serve, if they insist on causing divisions and creating obstacles contrary to the doctrine then avoid them.

And Paul gives some final words and one of the curious things here is that the person who held the pen had to get his word in too, I, Tertius, who wrote this letter, greet you in the Lord.

You see the apostle Paul had someone else writing for him, he was probably dictating to Tertius and Tertius is going to make sure the saints in Rome knew that he too wished to greet them and bless them.

The hosts, the house that Paul was staying send their greetings as well. It is interesting who this was or who is mentioned next, Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus, greet you.

That will be an interesting discussion for us when we come back and look more deeply into Romans chapter 13 in terms of our relationship to government.

And then we have this glorious doxology this kind of final summary statement of the whole book of Romans.

Remember chapter 1 verse 5 the apostle talks about the obedience of the faith, in chapter 10 he talks about the obedience of the faith, and that is what he is after here, he wants the church in Rome to be obedient to the faith and that they will be obedient to the faith as they come to know the Gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ which is according to that revelation of the Old Testament, it has been disclosed through the prophetic writings, it has been made known to all nations, all of this according to the command of God, God takes the initiative He is the one who reveals himself, He is the one who provides salvation, He is the one who demands a response of obedience of faith.

And all of this because He is the only wise God, He is the only one who knows everything, who knows how to think and how to live and He is the one to whom must be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Let's pray.

Father we thank you and praise you for this glorious revelation of yourself in the book of Romans and we pray that together as your people that we would learn how to live well, that we would see that it is through the transformation of our minds that we will live well according to your will, according to your desires, according to your ways.

So help us in all of our life, in the things little and in the things big, to think your thoughts, to pattern our minds, our thinking and our life after you and we pray that all this will abound for your honour and for your glory for ever, in Jesus name, Amen.



*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*

### *THE GLORY OF THE RESURRECTION*

The Biblical teaching of the resurrection has three fundamental facets. Firstly, the resurrection of Jesus Christ; "And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him" Mark 16:6. We should

always remember that for a resurrection, there must first be a death. Second is the resurrection from a life dead in sin to a new life in Christ Jesus. “And you hath he quickened [made alive], who were dead in trespasses and sins” Ephesians 2:1. This is the new birth that Jesus taught in the gospel of John, chapter 3. Thirdly is the resurrection of the dead at the last great day. “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” Daniel 12:2.

‘The doctrine of the resurrection is of utmost importance in our Christian belief and life. Our spiritual fathers considered it of such value and solidity, that it has found place in the major statements of doctrine, including the oldest and simplest creed known as the Apostle’s Creed (Martyrs Mirror, p. 27). All three aspects of the resurrection are not the work or invention of man but are miracles performed by the Almighty God of Heaven and earth. We, as Christians, should have great respect and interest in the mighty work that God has done and will do.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is recorded in all four gospels. Only the Christian faith can make the claim that our Leader, our Master, our Lord died, was buried, and arose again the third day. Other great men, so-called prophets and religious heads, have lived, died, were buried, and went back to the dust of the earth. Not so with Jesus Christ. The tomb was empty. He is risen; He is risen indeed! “And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulcher. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus” Luke 24:2-3. “He is not here, but is risen” Luke 24:6. The terms, “the tomb is empty” and “He is risen,” should give Christians today inspiration and meditation on the great and glorious significance it has for our lives.

The Apostle Paul was so inspired about the subject that he wrote the whole chapter of 1 Corinthians 15, proving, explaining, and clarifying the doctrine and glory of the resurrection. We ministers, ordained to the gospel of Jesus Christ, should proclaim the message, the hope for all people, the power, and the glory of the significance of the resurrection— past, present, and future. Revelation 20:6 states, “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

This is the new life in Christ Jesus. “Old things have passed away; behold all things have become new” 2 Cor. 5:17. The New Testament scriptures are rich in teaching and instruction on how the Christian life should be. There are some pertinent questions relative to these scriptures. Does our day—to-day life portray the resurrected life in Christ? With all the attractions and distractions of the modern-day world, how are we faring in living the life not conformed to the world and retaining a pilgrim and stranger status? Do we recognize the tactics and deception of Satan that infect us with things that really belong to the old worldly life? It is not an overstatement that a true Christian life compared to the worldling is as starkly different as day and night. Could it be that the foolish virgins believed intellectually in the resurrection with their minds, and the wise believed spiritually with their hearts? And, oh, what a difference that no tongue can describe, a difference for all eternity. The final resurrection, that last great day, what a day it will be!

When Jesus ascended in a cloud, two men stood by in white apparel and said, “This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” Acts 1:11. When the last trump shall sound, the angel shall stand upon the earth and sea “and swore by him that liveth for ever and ever... that there should be time no longer” Revelation 10:6. Then the earth and sea will give up their dead, and every knee shall bow and every tongue confess. Then men will hide themselves and say “to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” Revelation 6:16-17.

The Apostle Paul writes that we shall all be changed “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible” 1 Corinthians 15: 52. Note the positivity and clarity. On that day, the books will be opened and, also, the Book of Life. The dead will be judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works, “And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death” Revelation 20:14. Then Jesus shall sit on His throne and divide the people as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats, and He shall set the sheep on His right hand but the goats

on the left, and the goats will go away into everlasting punishment but the righteous into life eternal, Matthew 25:31-46. “Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left”. Matthew 24:40-41. These descriptions are of the great final day of the resurrection; the great dividing day, a day like has never been before.

What a terrible dark day for the lost when they realize the angel with the key has opened the bottomless pit, “and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit” Revelation 9:2. What fear, what horror will strike the hearts of the lost forever and ever in the flames of hell, forgotten of God.

But, oh, what a day of joy and happiness for the saved when we realize we have new bodies and the former things are passed away. Then the pearly gates will be wide open, and Jesus will say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord” Matthew 25:21. Jesus said, “In my Father’s house are many mansions” John 14:2; so there will be room enough, and to spare, for the saved of all ages and the millions of little children who died in their innocence. There we will be with Jesus, our Savior, and with God, our heavenly Father, also with our loved ones who have gone on before. It will be perfect love, perfect joy, complete rest, and total freedom.

No wonder Paul said he knew a man caught up to the third heaven and heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter 2 Corinthians 12:2-4. “Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus” Revelation 22:20. I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” John 14:3.

Will we be ready to go and be with Him always?



*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path*

*WHAT THE GRACE OF GOD MEANS TO ME*

For me, the grace of God means that I am as the following Scriptures describe – I was born in sin, as the psalmist said, “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me” Psalm 51:5).

I, like the Prophet Isaiah, have impure lips. “Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips” Isaiah 6:5.

I have a heart like Jeremiah who declared, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it” Jeremiah 17:9.

I understand Job’s declaration when he saw God’s righteousness; “Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” Job 42:6.

And I can testify as the Apostle Paul testified, “For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me” Romans 7:14-20

It means that I, who am thus, can rejoice in these promises. “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, and that I was “not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as ‘of a lamb without blemish and without spot’ 1 Peter 1:18-19), experiencing the reality that “therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” 2 Corinthians 5:17. “But be(ing) transformed by the renewing of [my]: mind, that [I] may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” Romans 12:2.

All this is the result of “God so loving the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have ev-

erlasting life” John 3:16. And His Son “who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world,” Galatians 1:4, “who loved me, and gave himself for me,” Galatians 2:20 “that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” Titus 2:14.

Thus the grace of God is shown in His love, mercy, and pardon for sins committed and victory offered to the penitent sinner who seeks the face of God with a broken and contrite heart, looking in faith to the sacrifice of Christ in his behalf. To such, God extends life in Christ Jesus, our Redeemer, who gave Himself for us, by whom we can be more than conquerors, Romans 8:37.

May we never despise the grace of God. “He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace” Hebrews 10:28-29.

*A brother in the faith.*



*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*

### CONFESSIOIN

*Holy Lord, I have sinned times without number, and been guilty of pride and unbelief, of failure to find Thy mind in Thy Word, of neglect to seek Thee in my daily life. My transgressions and short-comings present me with a list of accusations, but I bless Thee that they will not stand against me, for all have been laid on Christ. Go on to subdue my corruptions, and grant me grace to live above them. Let not the passions of the flesh nor lustings of the mind bring my spirit into subjection, but do Thou rule over me in liberty and power.*

*A Portion from Puritan Prayers*

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