

Sunday – November 26, 2017

Preparation

In Preparation of not only our upcoming week but also the next few weeks of Daily in the word, we'll be picking up in the first of Paul's thirteen consecutive books written primarily to the church. As we have transitioned from the Law to the Church, the next several books are where we will practically receive the doctrines to solidify our belief system. In Ephesians 3:2-9 Paul defines his ministry to the church by teaching us, "of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ". Therefore, it is within the letters from Paul that the Holy Spirit illuminates the "dispensation of the grace of God" and all things pertaining to it.

As we've mentioned the transitions found in the book of Acts, it's important to understand, or perhaps remind ourselves, of God's plan for interpreting scripture. In 1 Corinthians 2:11-14, Paul outlines the proper way for us to take the word of God and "rightly divide" the books we read by teaching us, "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Sadly, many either overlook this principle due to ignorance, or simply because they've never received the Holy Spirit via biblical salvation. Therefore, they become bogged down or confused with the transitions and begin to misappropriate doctrines to certain groups or times to which they never belonged. Paul's responsibility with the word of God was to declare "all the counsel of God" to

the intent that the word would resonate within the hearts of those who were under the sound of the message.

Moving forward throughout the New Testament, and namely the writings of Paul, may the Holy Spirit illuminate the words of this Book. May we be reassured of our beliefs of what a church should be and the responsibilities it contains. And may we learn from Paul's example and take the message of the gospel to the world to the intent that the word would resonate within the hearts of those who were under the sound of the message.

Monday – November 27, 2017

TODAY'S READING: ROMANS 1- 3

OVERVIEW:

The righteousness of God required by the heathen (chapter 1); the righteousness of God required by the hypocrite and Hebrew (chapter 2); the righteousness of God required by all of humanity (chapter 3).

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

To this point in our reading through the New Testament we have been in the historical section. In the four Gospels, we were able to see four historical perspectives of Jesus Christ's person and ministry. The Book of Acts revealed to us the history of the early church through the "acts of the apostles," and allowed us to see the transition that occurred from God's dealing with the Nation of Israel to God's dealing with the Church. As we have learned, there are three transitional Books in the New Testament:

1) Matthew, which bridges from the Old Testament to the New Testament. 2) Acts, which bridges from the Nation of Israel back to the Church. 3) Hebrews, which bridges from the Church back to the Nation of Israel.

We have just crossed the bridge provided by the Book of Acts, and are now entering the doctrinal teachings of the Church Age.

The Book of Romans is the greatest Book in the Bible on Christian doctrine. It is very different from the other New Testament Books in that Paul is not writing to address doctrinal or practical problems with this church. What the content of this Book actually becomes is the handbook that gives us God's viewpoint on what He is doing in and through His church. That's why God placed this Book immediately following the Book of Acts. Right after you come through the historical section of the New Testament, and prior to getting into the other church epistles, God gives us His handbook for understanding the doctrine of the church. It is interesting that the order of the letters to the churches in the New Testament follow the prescription laid down in II Timothy 3:16, *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for :*

- DOCTRINE – Romans (the New Testament Book on Christian doctrine)
- REPROOF – I and II Corinthians (Books that reprove sin)
- CORRECTION – Galatians (A Book specifically written to correct false doctrine)

□ INSTRUCTION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS – Ephesians, Philipians, Colossians, I & II Thessalonians (Books teaching righteous living based on sound doctrine)

The apostle God used to write this epistle (letter) is identified in the first word of the first verse of the first chapter of the Book. It was written by Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15), as were all of the letters to the churches. Paul was uniquely qualified to be the one God chose to write the Book of Romans in that he was born a Jew (Acts 21:39; 22:3), was completely familiar with Greek culture (Acts 21:37), and was the possessor of Roman citizenship (Acts 16:37; 22:25; 23:37).

It is important to note that though God chose to use Paul to write this epistle to the Romans, Paul himself had never actually been to Rome. He had a passion within him to get there to minister to the believers, but somehow in God's sovereignty, He had not allowed it. In Paul's introduction in chapter one, he feels compelled to let the Romans (and us!) know that. He writes, *"For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers; Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you. For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles."*

I don't know how your mind works, but when you read verses like that, don't you just have to ask, why wouldn't God let Paul get to Rome sooner? I mean, if he's the apostle to the Gentiles, why wouldn't God allow him to go and minister to his heart's content? And don't you think Paul had that very same question? But then think about it. Do you realize that most of the believers to which God would use the Apostle Paul to establish in Christian doctrine (1:11), would be people just like the Romans, who had never and would never see Paul face to face? God uses his ministry through Paul to accomplish the same purposes in us that He did in the believers in Rome in the first century! It's a very subtle reminder, that when we have a passion for a good thing that God doesn't bring to pass, it is most likely because He is serving a much more grand and glorious purpose! In this case, if Paul would have gotten to Rome on his time schedule, we wouldn't have the Book of Romans!

Following the introduction in 1:1-15, beginning in 1:16, Paul identifies two ways God exhibits His power. First, He demonstrates His righteousness to those who

receive the gospel by faith (1:16,17). Second He demonstrates His wrath to those who reject His truth by ungodliness (1:18, 21). In the remainder of chapter one, Paul catalogs the sins of the Gentiles, beginning with their rejection of His glory (1:21-23), which resulted in their perversion physically (1:24-25), emotionally (1:26-27), and mentally (1:28-32).

Having proven the ungodliness of the Gentiles in chapter one, he now turns the spotlight on the sins of the hypocrites (2:1-16) and the Hebrews (2:17-29). He begins chapter two by showing the hypocrites the inexcusability of their behavior (2:1-4). Anticipating their objections, Paul informs them of an inescapable appointment with God's judgment (2:5-16). Paul concludes the chapter by exposing the unreliable confidence the Jews place in the law (2:17, 24) and in the unprofitable ritual of circumcision (2:25-29).

In chapter three, Paul will reach the conclusion to which he has been moving since chapter one, verse 18. The conclusion is identified in 3:9, *"For we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all UNDER SIN."* Whether you're a HEATHEN (1:21-32), a HYPOCRITE (2:1-16), or a HEBREW (2:17-29), the scriptures conclude that *"there is none righteous, no, not one"* (3:10). You see, Paul realizes that before someone receives the "good news" of the gospel, they must acknowledge the "bad news" of their sinfulness. So chapter three begins by proving all of humanity's condemnation before God (3:1-20), and concludes by manifesting the availability of righteousness to all who choose to receive it (3:21-31). Take note of the fact that God's righteousness is offered with three conditions:

- 1) It must be received apart from the law. (3:21)
- 2) It is only available through Christ. (3:22-26)
- 3) It can only be accepted by faith. (3:21-31)

Note some key facts and figures about the Book of Romans:

- Approximate date of writing: 60 A.D.
- Key Verse: Romans 1:16, 17
- Key Words: Righteousness; appears 39 times
- Christ is seen as: our righteousness (Romans 3:23, 24)
- Chapters: 16
- Verses: 433
- Words: 9,477

Here is a simple outline to guide you through the Book: The Revelation of Righteousness In The Gospel:

- The Righteousness Received In Salvation (Chapters 1-8)
- The Righteousness Rejected By The Jews (Chapters 9-11)
- The Righteousness Reproduced In Sanctification (Chapters 12-16)

Tuesday – November 28, 2017

TODAY'S READING: ROMANS 4 - 8

OVERVIEW: The righteousness of God received by faith (chapter 4); the revelation of the righteousness of God realized in the soul (chapter 5); the righteousness of God revealed in trials (chapters 6-7) ; the righteousness of God represented as eternal (chapter 8).

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

As we discussed in yesterday's comments, in terms of doctrine, there is not a more important Book in the entire New Testament than the Book of Romans. And in terms of doctrine, God is more than just a little adamant about it! Though the heed and call in "Christian" circles is to "let go" of doctrine for the sake of so-called unity, God's clear admonition to His church is to "*hold fast*" (II Tim. 1:13) to sound doctrine, so that we can be genuinely unified with everyone else who wraps their hands firmly around the truth of His Word! It is not simply our love that unites us, but our love of the truth. True biblical love always has truth as its basis (See II John 1:1-4 and the usage of the word "truth" five times in these four verses). It is worth noting that in the epistles Paul wrote to Pastor Timothy and Pastor Titus (i.e. the "pastoral epistles") he mentions doctrine no less than 13 times! (See I Tim. 1:3,10; 4:1,6,16; 5:17; 6:1, 3; II Tim. 3:10; 4:2; Titus 1:9; 2:1,10.) Again, doctrine is what the Book of Romans is all about, not the least of which is the doctrine of salvation. There is no other Book of the Bible that provides more complete teaching on this most important subject than the Book of Romans.

Something else that is important to note as we make our way through this incredible Book is Paul's utilization of questions in presenting his case. Perhaps you picked up on that in yesterday's reading. In yesterday's reading alone (Rom. 1-3), do you realize that Paul asked over 25 questions?! It's almost as if he anticipates the objections a person might raise in response to the truth he is presenting, and takes away their argument before they even get there. It is a masterful teaching technique that the Spirit of God uniquely gifted Paul to employ. Pay close attention to this technique as we make our way through the remainder of this Book.

As we move into chapter 4 today, it is important to note a very significant transition that is being made. Whereas chapters 1-3 focused on the fact that God's righteousness is **REQUIRED BY SINNERS**, chapter 4 focuses on the fact that God's righteousness is **RECEIVED BY FAITH**. Whereas chapters 1- 3

focused on the “WHAT,” chapter 4 focuses on the “HOW.”

In 4:1-8, Paul introduces us to the REWARD of righteousness by faith, namely that we are “justified.” To be justified means to be rendered righteous. It may be trite for some, but a great way to remember the truth encompassed in the word “justified,” is that it means “just-as-if-I’d” never sinned. As an illustration, Paul reaches back into the Old Testament to the life of Abraham to point to one who was justified by faith (4:1-8). Then, Paul reveals three truths concerning how it is that justification is actually reckoned to us: 1) It is not by circumcision (4:9-12); 2) It is not by the law (4:13-15); 3) It is only by grace through faith (4:16-22). The chapter closes with the promise that just as God imputed righteousness to Abraham because of his faith, He, likewise, imputes righteousness to each of us who receive the gospel by faith.

Having laid down the reality that the righteousness God demands is not an ACHIEVED RIGHTEOUSNESS, but a RECEIVED RIGHTEOUSNESS (that is, a righteousness that is not of WORKS, but by FAITH), Paul then moves in chapter 5 to lay out the fact that because we didn’t do anything to EARN our salvation (our righteousness), there is also nothing we can do to LOSE it! The doctrine of the eternal security of the believer (one of the most controversial doctrines in Christianity!) is firmly established in the Book of Romans, particularly in chapter 5. This chapter can be divided into two sections. The first section (5:1-10) identifies the BENEFIT of justification by faith: SECURITY. The second section (5:11-21) identifies the BASIS for justification by faith: ATONEMENT.

As we move into chapter 6, another transition is being made:

- Chapters 1-5 teach us about JUSTIFICATION by faith.

- Chapters 6-8 teach us about SANCTIFICATION by the Spirit.

- Chapters 1-5 identify how God saved us from the PENALTY of sin.

- Chapters 6-8 identify how Christ saved us from the POWER of sin.

- Chapters 1-5 show us the GATEWAY to the Christian life.

- Chapters 6-8 show us the PATHWAY of the Christian life.

While there is a significant contrast between Romans 1-5 and 6-8, there is an equally significant connection between Romans 6, 7 and 8. The connection between these three chapters is linked to a little phrase in Romans 5:17: “*reign in life.*” Notice that Paul does not fully explain (in this verse) HOW those who have been justified by faith in Christ shall “*reign in life.*” The full explanation comes in Romans 6, 7 and 8. Check it out

□Romans 6 explains how the believer can reign in life because SIN no longer REIGNS over us. (6:12)

□Romans 7 explains how the believer can reign in life because the LAW no longer has DOMINION over us. (7:1,4)

□Romans 8 explains how the believer can reign in life because the SPIRIT now gives LIFE and LIBERTY to us. (8:2,4)

TODAY'S READING: ROMANS 9-11

OVERVIEW:

The revelation of the righteousness of God rejected in Judaism (chapters 9-11).

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

Today we move into the second half of this great doctrinal epistle of the Apostle Paul. Keep in mind that the purpose of the writing of Romans is to reveal the righteousness of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ (1:16-17). In the first half of Romans, Paul identified a number of PRINCIPLES related to the righteousness we receive through the gospel:

- Sin is a universal reality. (Chapters 1-3)
- Salvation is a free gift. (Chapter 3)
- Salvation is received by faith. (Chapter 4)
- Salvation is secure and forever. (Chapter 5)
- Sanctification is from sin and the law. (Chapters 6-7)
- Sanctification is by the Spirit. (Chapter 8)

Beginning in chapter 9, Paul turns his attention to some of the PROBLEMS related to the righteousness we receive through the gospel; particularly, problems that related to the Jews.

The first problem had to do with the fact that at the time Paul wrote the Book of Romans, the Old Testament sacrifices were still being offered in the Temple at Jerusalem. The principles Paul laid out in Romans 1-8 have rendered those sacrifices completely MEANINGLESS.

The second problem was related to the reality that each time Paul preached in a Jewish synagogue, he knew that Judaism and Christianity could not co-exist. If Christianity continued to spread across the world, Judaism's fate was sealed. It was just that reality that caused Paul to so bitterly oppose Christianity prior to his conversion.

Finally, the greatest problem Paul faced was reconciling in people's minds the doctrines of the church with the covenants God had made to the Nation of Israel. The two questions that continually surfaced each time Paul preached in the presence of Jews were: "Are the promises of God to the Nation of Israel now null and void?" and "Where does the Jew stand in relationship to God in this dispensation?" The purpose of Romans 9, 10 and 11 is to provide answers to those questions. The Spirit of God obviously knew that these answers would blast Satan's attempts to pervert the gospel with the false teachings of the Judiazers.

Some have called chapters 9, 10 and 11 parenthesis in the Book of Romans. A parenthesis is defined as a sentence or paragraph that provides the reader with an explanation. That's exactly what Romans 9, 10 and 11 do! They provide us with an explanation of how it is that God could set aside His chosen people for a period of time, and how it is that God will restore Israel at a future date, and fulfill all the promises He made to them in the Old Testament.

The three chapters of this parenthesis can be broken down as follows:

- In Romans 9, the emphasis is on Israel's PAST ELECTION.
- In Romans 10, the emphasis is on Israel's PRESENT REJECTION.
- In Romans 11, the emphasis is on Israel's FUTURE RESTORATION.

A couple of other side notes:

Don't let Romans 9:13 freak you out: "*Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.*" The "*as it is written*" is a reference to Malachi 1:2-3, and the statement is made in reference to NATIONS, not INDIVIDUALS. "Esau" is representative of the Edomite nation. "Jacob" is representative of the Nation of Israel. Because of John 3:16 and countless other Scriptures, there is no way that the Bible teaches that God loves some sinners, and hates others.

Concerning the hardening of Pharaoh in 9:17-18, understand that God gives people what they want. Exodus 8:15 says that Pharaoh hardened his heart. Then in Exodus 9:12, it says that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. God simply gave Pharaoh what he wanted. It is the same principle that is repeated in II Thessalonians 2:8-12. There are people who have understood the truth and have had the opportunity to receive the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved (2:10). Rather than receive the truth, however, they "*had pleasure in unrighteousness*" (2:12), and, therefore, lied to themselves, and rejected the truth. The passage teaches that in the Tribulation Period when the Antichrist comes on the scene, God will say in effect, "You wanted a lie, so that's exactly what you'll get!" Verses 11 and

12 say that God Himself will “*send them strong delusion*” so that they will believe the lie of the Antichrist, and be forever damned.

In Pharaoh’s case, God hardened Pharaoh’s heart because Pharaoh hardened Pharaoh’s heart. With those who miss the rapture because they lied to themselves when God presented them the truth, God will simply give them what they proved they wanted.

Is there anything you are communicating to God by your life that you want, that you don’t really want God to give you?

Thursday – November 30, 2017

TODAY'S READING: ROMANS 12-16

OVERVIEW:

The revelation of the righteousness of God reproduced in the church (chapters 12-16).

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

After introducing his theme to the Book of Romans, the revelation of the righteousness of God in the gospel of Christ (1:16,17), Paul walked us through eight chapters of PRINCIPLES related to that gospel. Then, beginning in chapter 9 and continuing through chapter 11, Paul identified and addressed the PROBLEMS of the gospel as they related to the Nation of Israel. We called this section a “parenthesis” because if you were to read from Romans 8:39 right into 12:1, it would make perfect sense! Check it out:

8:38 “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 8:39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”

Now beginning with Romans 12:1, we move into the third and final section of this great epistle. Having considered the PRINCIPLES and PROBLEMS of the gospel in the first 11 chapters, in these final five chapters (12-16), Paul takes us into an examination of the PRACTICE of the gospel. What he is doing in these chapters is a classic Pauline pattern that we will be able to observe in all of his writings. In each of the New Testament letters God inspired Paul to write, he always establishes the specific doctrines in the beginning of the Book. Each letter then concludes by providing the reader with a series of practical DUTIES which are based upon the DOCTRINES he's presented. Paul was aware of the danger in laying down PRINCIPLES without identifying how those PRINCIPLES were to affect the PRACTICE of our lives. As Bible believers, we must understand that DOCTRINE and DUTIES always go hand-in-hand. Each time we approach the Word of God, we must ask ourselves two very simple questions: “What is it that God wants me to BELIEVE?” and “How is it that God wants me to BEHAVE?” You see this pattern very clearly in the Book of Romans. For the first eight

chapters Paul identifies the DOCTRINAL PRINCIPLES related to the gospel; then in the final five chapters, he provides the PRACTICAL DUTIES based upon those principles.

Beginning in chapter 12 and continuing through chapter 14, Paul identifies the following relationships that have been dramatically affected by receiving the gospel. With each relationship he provides a corresponding responsibility:

- Our relationship to God Offer reasonable service. (12:1-2)
- Our relationship to other believers Minister our gifts. (12:3-16)
- Our relationship to our enemies Overcome evil, with good. (12:17-21)
- Our relationship to rulers Be subject. (13:1-7)
- Our relationship to our neighbors Owe nothing but love. (13:8-14)
- Our relationship to weaker believers Receive and edify. (14:1-23)

Realizing the benefit of an example when transitioning from theory to practice, in chapter 15, Paul provides three examples of people who ministered to others. He begins with the ministry of Christ and how He pleased and received others (15:1-13). Next, he provides himself as an example of one that forwarded God's message (15:14). Finally, he holds up the Gentile churches and their sacrificial giving to the impoverished saints at Jerusalem as an example (15:25-35).

In chapter 16, God finds an incredible way to teach us about the important keys to Paul's ministry. Paul sends his greetings to 26 individuals, two households, and several churches that are meeting in people's homes. That's a lot of relationships, considering they reside in a city that he's not yet been permitted to visit! As you read this list, you can't help but be impressed with the fact that Paul loved people. No doubt, many of these names represented people he had personally won to Christ in other places who now resided in Rome. It is more than apparent that Paul's ministry centered around two key things: the GREAT COMMANDMENT (Loving God and loving people), and the GREAT COMMISSION (Reproducing reproducers — i.e. Making disciples!) May each of our ministries reflect the same.

Friday – December 1st, 2017

TODAY'S READING: I CORINTHIANS 1-6

OVERVIEW: An appeal for unity (chapter 1); the wisdom of God vs. the wisdom of this world (chapter 2); eternal building vs. temporary building (chapter 3); understanding our stewardship (chapter 4); dealing with unrepentant sin (chapter 5); dealing with conflict in the body (chapter 6).

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

The city of Corinth was located on one of the most important east-west trade and travel routes in the Roman Empire. It was a financial center especially noted for commerce, culture, and absolute perverted corruption. Corinth was also the headquarters for the worship of Venus and for some of the mystery cults from Egypt and Asia. It was the fourth largest city in the Roman Empire.

The founding of the church at Corinth is detailed in Acts 18:1-17. The apostle Paul and his missionary team established this church and Paul actually spent a year and half teaching and preaching in this church. Yet, by the time Paul writes this letter, the church was totally operating in the flesh. In fact, Paul finds absolutely nothing whatsoever in the entire letter for which to commend them!

There is NOTHING this church was doing that should be used as a model. They are messed up on their relationships with each other, their attitude about sin, their teaching about marriage, their liberty in Christ, exercising their spiritual gifts and the resurrection, of all things! In spite of that fact, there is a whole movement – the Charismatic movement – that bases many of their beliefs and practices on things the Corinthian church had espoused. We will see that God's simple and clear instructions to this church are not followed by those proposing to be "filled with the Spirit". However, there are bigger problems with this church than their abuse of spiritual gifts. In fact, God chose to not even address their abuse of spiritual gifts until the end of the Book. This should raise a red flag when we think about problems in the body of Christ. I'd rather partner for the cause of Christ with a genuine brother who mistakenly believes tongues are still for today, than to try and partner with a brother that has his "dispensations" right, but his "disposition" wrong, as Vance Havner used to say.

One of the most amazing things to note about this letter, is that as Paul writes under the inspiration of the Spirit of God to address such an incredibly problematic church is how many times God clears off a spot to speak directly to the pastors or elders of the church at Corinth. We all certainly know that

everything rises or falls on leadership, right? Surely it would be a quick fix to their problems to get the pastors to do what's right, so the rest of the church could simply follow their lead, wouldn't it? But do you know how many times Paul actually speaks to the pastors in this letter? ZERO! Does that mean that pastors do not have a key responsibility in the leadership of the church? Absolutely not! It simply reveals that we are all in this thing together. Make no mistake, a pastor will most certainly give an account to God for how he led God's people and how he provided oversight of the church (Heb. 13:17). However, each person will give an account for himself at the Judgment Seat of Christ (Rom. 14:12).

We're not going to be able pull out the "if my pastor would have just led/taught/preached/visited/prayed or whatever(!) better I would have been different" card. The lesson of I Corinthians is that a church that is operating in the flesh or in the Spirit, is operating that way because of the members of the body, not just a select few. We each need to examine and judge our own lives and what we are contributing or not contributing to the body.

The Corinthians had sent some questions to Paul they needed answered. However, before Paul begins to answer those questions beginning in chapter 7, there were other issues that the Spirit of God knew needed to be dealt with first. When you think about all the problems this church had, it is interesting that the first four chapters deal with one primary issue – division in the body. Many things are addressed in these first four chapters, but they ultimately come back to the principle of a united body versus a divided body. Chapter 1 and verse 10 is the clear statement of God's will for this church. It also tells us how this can be accomplished in a local body – *"but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."* How do you have the same mind and same judgment? Note four principles from I Corinthians 1-4:

1. **Be a fool for Christ (1:18, 25; 4:9-10)** We're going to be a fool for something or somebody! The Corinthians were consumed with not looking foolish to the world and in so doing, became fools. Are you concerned about what your unsaved friends and family think of you, or are you consumed with knowing Christ?
2. **Trust the wisdom of God (Chapter 2)** The Word of God (that which is spiritual) must be the basis for our decisions and choices in life.
3. **Build with eternal materials (Chapter 3)** Are you building your life with things that will withstand the fire of God and last for eternity, or are you consumed with things that will vanish away?

4. **Be a faithful steward (Chapter 4)** The responsibility of a steward is to use the resources he's been given for the purpose of the owner. Our Owner has told us to "lay up treasure in heaven" and "not to lay up treasure upon earth". Our Owner has put us in trust with a message to proclaim to those who haven't believed. Are you being a faithful steward?

Do you see how simple God's plan is? If all of us in the local body of believers are consumed with Christ, it's easy to be of the "*same mind and same judgment*". But when we become concerned about our reputation, our position, our way and everyone else in the body is doing the same, we're heading for big trouble! It's almost as simple as "*Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh*"!

In chapter 5, God deals with this church regarding their lack of dealing with a sinning brother. Verse 1 reveals that there is a man in the church living in sin, and obviously allowing that sin to rule his life. In verse 2 God rebukes these believers for not dealing with this issue of sin. Notice that God's rebuke is first and foremost, that they did not mourn this sin. What is our reaction when we see a brother or sister allowing sin to rule their lives? Do we care? Do we sense some sort of satisfaction because we kind of thought they were like that? Do we think "I would never do that"? Or do we have the response God is looking for – mourning (5:2)? In verses 3-5, God instructs them to remove this man from the fellowship of their church. The reason for such seemingly harsh treatment however, is so he will be removed from the protection afforded him in the body of Christ, so he will see the importance of repenting, so that God can and will be glorified in his life. In fact, verse 5 says that the flesh may be destroyed, but the spirit will be saved. In verse 8, God mentions two types of leaven – malice and wickedness. One is an evil life, and one is an evil attitude. These are areas in which we must judge ourselves in daily. God also gives the remedy: sincerity and truth. You must have both. Sincerity without truth will do you no good. Many sincere people live a defeated life. However, truth without sincerity is not any better. The Pharisees had truth, but they didn't have sincerity. In verses 9-11, God clearly teaches that we are not to separate ourselves physically from this lost world. We should expect them to live in sin because they are lost, and we must reach them with the gospel! However, we are not to associate ourselves with believers whose lives are being lived according to the flesh.

Notice also the type of sin God talks about in 5:9-11. He talks about the ones in which we would easily agree– fornication, drunkenness, idolatry – but He also lists covetousness, extortion, and railing. God is showing that we may have our list of "bad sins" and "acceptable sins", but He most certainly does not! Someone

living in the flesh that never does anything immoral but is always talking negatively about people (railing), is just as overtaken in sin as the person in verse 1! Verses 12-13 teach us that God will judge the lost world, but our responsibility is to reach them.

One of the most obvious ways to see the division in the body was the way the Corinthian believers took each other to court. The key principle of chapter 6 is that believers should not take each other to court over civil matters. If someone believes they have been wronged, they need to allow the church to handle the matter. Sometimes this may take great faith. It also may not result in what one party regards as fair. The larger issue in all these problems is, are we seeking God's solution or simply relying on our own standard? May we seek to yield to the Spirit each day, and allow Him to control our thoughts and actions.

Saturday – December 2nd, 2017

Reflection

With less than thirty days left of Daily in the word for the year, it seems as though we have definitely picked up speed as, just last week, we read through the entire book of Romans, and began the book of 1 Corinthians. As we began the book of Romans, Paul laid the foundation by emphasizing the gospel of Christ. Comparing scripture with scripture, we looked to 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 for the simple definition of the gospel as Paul wrote, “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures” . So, as we’ ve learned or should already understand, it is the gospel that changes lives by generating life. Paul expounds on this fact concerning the gospel in Romans 1:17, by penning, “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” The righteousness of God is what will separate us from heaven and hell, eternal life and eternal death. It is the righteousness of God that the Lord Jesus Christ offered as he suffered on the cross and willfully seceded from life on this earth, thereby exchanging His life for our filthiness, because, as Isaiah 64:6 teaches us, “...we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” Paul outlines the process in Romans 3:23-26 as he writes, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” Paul simply states it in other words in 2 Corinthians 5:21, “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

This being said, and considering the debt our Saviour paid on the cross, in Romans 6, Paul takes the time to discuss our responsibility with this newfound righteousness that’ s been imputed unto us. In Romans 6:1-2 Paul writes, “ What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God

forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Verse 6 goes on to say, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Then, in verses 11-13, we read, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." As our Devotional Scripture from Day 332 stated, "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit." (Romans 8:5) To close, Romans 6:19 states, "I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness."

As we continue along throughout our New Testament, and namely Paul's writings, there will be much more to discuss and highlight than we could possibly take the time to do within these little devotionals. May we consciously and prayerfully consider each word we read, and approach the word of God with an attitude of thanks because, to say the least, we are so undeserving of the words He has preserved for us.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION:

Romans 1:16-17 "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."

Romans 8:5 "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit."

Romans 10:3 "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

Romans 12:2 "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

1 Corinthians 3:16 "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"