

# Romans 12-16

Sunday 4/17/2011

We will have our typical sunrise service next week at 10:30 AM, and we will have our typical Easter message. I am thinking about preaching a letter from hell next week, and we will see how that goes.

We have our Bibles this morning; let us turn back to the book of Romans. We have been coming through each book of the Bible. We are in the New Testament now, almost halfway through. We have been dealing with the book of Romans. Every time, and I know we have taught these books several times, every time I do it, I try to do it a little different way to give you a little more perspective on it, to add some things that you cannot do all at one time; there is just no way. So, I try to work it that way, and I have enjoyed doing it, and I hope you have too.

We have been two weeks in Romans; we will finish it up today, and this is our third section. Remember that Christ is typified, and that is really what we are trying to accomplish with these, going through these books, showing you how Christ is typified in each book. In Romans, He is typified as Christ, our righteousness.

## I. Romans: The Christian Declaration of Independence

When I look at the book of Romans, I always relate it to Washington, D.C., in a very secure vault. In fact, if you ever saw the fun movie National Treasure and all other versions thereof, you have some idea of the vault system we have that protects what we have as a country, probably our most precious document as a country, and that would be the Declaration of Independence.

The Declaration of Independence is even more important than the Constitution, and I know you have to have both to have a working government. But in the analysis of things, the Declaration of Independence was our declaring something before we tried to constitute something, which is our country. The Constitution of the United States is based on the word "constitution," which means getting it all together. The Constitution was the actual getting together of what we were going to be, but the Declaration of Independence was our declaring ourselves that we were going to be independent. It had a lot of great things that went along with it.

That document was written by our Founding Fathers, and the reason why it was written was to set down the baseline, the foundation, the fundamentals, the groundwork of what was going to become the greatest nation in the world: the United States of America. What they did was lay out the original course that the Founding Fathers had set forth at the founding of this country. The purpose behind it was, and it is obvious, the purpose behind it was, and the reason why it is so protected is because they wanted some 300 years later that we could look back as a country. They knew, as anybody should know, that things change as you go through time. They wanted a permanent fixed point where anybody in history could look back and come back to the starting point, that we would not lose our way and we would stay in line with the early American doctrine that our Founding Fathers put together.

They stood at a crossroads, they really did. They stood at a place where they were on the dawn of a new horizon. Leaving the Bible out of it for a moment, just from the secular side of it, at the beginning of this country, they had broken off the shackles of England. Before that, they had broken off the shackles of the French. Now they had come to the point where they were going to forge their own nation, and they needed a document. They needed a document that declared something, and that document that declared something, we celebrate every July 4th, our declaration of independence.

From that, over the years, things change, and things get twisted. We talk about freedom today in a much different light than the Founding Fathers did. The idea of freedom today, and it becomes a political thing, has kind of twisted itself into democracy and freeing the oppressed and all of those things. That is not what the Founding Fathers meant by their Declaration of Independence; that was not it at all. Their idea of freedom was freedom to worship God and teach the Bible to your family without fear of oppression from a religious church state.

Every Founding Father that came to this country, who were really the fathers, their fathers, the Pilgrims that came before them in the 1600s, every one of them had understood the brutality of a church-state system. Many of them fled from Germany where the Lutheran church had turned into a terrible church-state situation, persecuting anybody that did not follow their doctrine. The Roman Catholic Church had persecuted them for centuries, and there was great persecution there. The Presbyterian Church, which formed out of the Reformation along with the Lutheran Church, there too, in Scotland, they were putting pressure and persecuting Baptists just like everybody else was. So, there was not a man on that panel that he himself or some member of his family did not suffer through the great persecution that had taken place because of the Bible and because of what they wanted to believe.

Their concept of freedom was not freedom in the sense of the oppressed of mankind. Their idea of freedom was the true biblical freedom: once you get saved, you are free in Christ, and you can do whatever you want to do and worship God by the Bible dictates. That is what the whole concept was.

Of course, in New Testament Christianity, our Christian Declaration of Independence, and I want you to see the parallel here, in New Testament Christianity, our Christian Declaration of Independence would be the Book of Romans. Again, watch the parallels. In New Testament Christianity, our Founding Fathers, the main one would be Paul. He wrote Romans. We have already studied how Romans developed out of the Book of Acts, how Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John laid down a historical perspective. Now Romans takes up the, or Acts takes up the transitional. The church is firmly established with Paul, and the first book he writes is Romans.

When he writes that book, as our spiritual Founding Father, he writes Romans to set the course and understanding for us, just like the Declaration of Independence was intended to keep our focus down through the centuries of why this country was formed and what it believed. The Book of Romans, written by Paul, our Christian Declaration of Independence, declared what we now believed as the church. Paul wrote it; God had him write it, put it into the Bible in the order that it is, that you and I, some 2,000 years down the line, could look back and completely

understand through history that we would not lose our way, that we would stay in line with the doctrine of the early church, which we already know now is the true line.

Unfortunately, in both cases, that did not happen. America has lost sight of where God wants her to go and what her Founding Fathers wanted to do, and the Christian church has lost sight of the same thing. Those precious truths today for America and for Christianity have no resemblance whatsoever of what God intended for them to be.

## II. The True Meaning of Separation of Church and State

We talk a lot about church and state, and there is a big issue today about the separation of church and state. Yet most people do not understand that the beginning of the inception of the first concept of the separation of church and state had nothing to do with church-state things, praying in school, or any of those things. In fact, it was George Washington who wrote many of the textbooks, who saw where the educational system was going to go and what it needed. He founded it, and up to the 1920s, schools still used George Washington's articles in school. In that, he makes the preference of how the Bible has to be taught, how the Bible has to be laid out to these kids. Of course, we have lost sight of all that on the idea of separation of church and state.

A case in point: back in the early 1800s, there was a group called the Danbury Baptists in Danbury, Connecticut. They were a Baptist group. They wrote the President of the United States, and they had heard that the President of the United States was going to invoke that a church religion was put into play. They wrote him a letter, and he wrote them back and said that that would never happen. That is where you first find the phrase "church state versus religion." It was not written to keep prayer out of schools. In its original foundation, it was written to keep this country from falling into a church-state setup, and the Danbury Baptists were worried about that. They wrote John Adams, who was President at that time, I believe, and he wrote them back. The letters still survive, and he assured them that the separation of church and state, and that is where you first find it, had nothing to do with praying in schools, had nothing to do with reading the Bible in school, had nothing to do with prayer groups in schools, or nothing to do with praying before a basketball game or a football game. It had to do with a setup of a church-state religion that would force everybody to be one religion and then persecute the ones who did not. That is where it started. Wow, look how far we have come from that idea.

It is the same way with Christianity. The Bible, the book of Romans, was written that you and I would understand the fundamental doctrines that God had for the church, how it changed from where He went to where it is at. That is why Romans transitions itself along with the book of Acts to show you that.

## III. Structure of Romans: Historical, Doctrinal, Practical

We now know that Romans breaks down into basically three sections.

1. Chapter 1 through Chapter 4: The historical section. This is where he shows you how God is changing, how He is dealing with Jew and Gentile.

2. Chapter 5 through Chapter 11: The great doctrinal section. This is where, as our kids learned in their memory verse, one of the ones that I really wanted them to learn, Romans 5:1. Romans 5:1

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: This doctrinal section lays out what you and I believe, every aspect of what you and I believe. Of course, that runs from chapter 5 up to chapter 11.

3. Chapter 12 through Chapter 16: The practical section. This is where we are at. We just started this last week, and we are going to pick it up and finish it today. This is where we will see how the things that we have learned in Romans, the new things that are given to us as the church, are now how they work in a practical situation. That is very important.

You have heard me say last week, and you have heard me say it many, many times throughout the years, that the Bible is profitable for all things in faith and practice. We explained that last week. Faith is what we believe. Practice is how we live what we believe. Romans is our layout of how we follow the Bible and how we do everything that we do in the Word of God. Everything in your Bible.

Do you notice Romans follows the layout of the whole Bible? I have told you many times, every aspect of the Bible will have a historical, doctrinal, and inspirational application. Well, Romans is the same way. You have a historical section, Romans 1-4, a doctrinal section, Romans 5-12, and then an inspirational section or practical section, Romans 13-16.

## IV. The Living Sacrifice: Romans 12 Recap

Last week we started that practical section. It starts in Romans 12. In Romans 12, two great verses there, 1 and 2, where he talks about:

*Romans 12:1-2*

*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.*

*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.*

We talked about that, how that you and I have something to prove. We talked about how the only thing that the unsaved world, when they look and want to try to find God, they cannot understand God. They cannot understand the Bible. The Bible says the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God. The only way that they are going to find God and see God and understand God is through your life and my life being the living sacrifice. Through your changed life, through your attitude, through your lifestyle, through the way that you look at things and deal with things and do things, they now find Christ, and they find Him as their personal Savior.

I told you last time that we talked about that, many of you are in this church today and are saved today because you saw the change in somebody else's life, and it led you to the point where the Holy Spirit of God brought you to the point where you got saved, and here is where you are at

today. Of course, this is where the Bible calls it a living sacrifice. Then it says, "proving what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

We have talked about the will of God many times. Most people think the will of God and the plan of God are one and the same. If you are coming through our discipleship lessons, I think it is lesson six that is the lesson on the will of God and the plan of God, and they are not the same. The will of God is the same for everybody in this room. You have heard me say this many, many times. The plan of God is different. God may have a different plan; that is something that He wants you to do. But the will of God is never what God wants you to do. The will of God is what God wants you to be. When you, the Bible says that you are to prove that good and acceptable and perfect will of God, that good and acceptable and perfect will of God is that you and I are the living sacrifice. That is what we have to prove.

Yesterday, and I did not say anything about it earlier because I wanted to talk about it now, I appreciate all of you folks that came down and helped me down there at Liberty Memorial. The Kansas City Collectors Club is a great organization. There is so much history in it and so many people who are dedicated to preserving history, but they do not have God. Your testimony, the guys that came down and worked Friday night, and the people who came down and stayed and helped them, they do not have a clue how they cannot figure that out. They cannot get anybody to do anything down there. For you guys to come down, and when I talk about you and brag on you and how you love history, you love the military, you are patriotic, but then you also love God, it is the greatest testimony. I got four opportunities yesterday just witnessing to people in the club that came up and asked me and talked to me about things. They all know I am a pastor, and they really have a great respect for that, but that really did not get my foot in the door.

We talk about opportunities to win people to Christ and minister, and you do it not by getting and earning the right. You guys earned me the right yesterday to sit down and talk with those people, and I am sure that I will hear about it even more. It is all about that. They saw the difference in you. They saw, and they all said the same thing, "They are clean, they are clean-cut, they are wholesome, they are nice kids." Everybody was impressed. Of course, then they are impressed with, I think we had 45 people out of our church came down there and talked to those guys. That is a testimony to them. I am telling you, that is what we are talking about. Your labor of love to go down there and do that is as much of a ministry as anything else we do. You just do not see it as apparent. But the Lord takes those things.

Do you remember the story I told you a couple of months ago about the two guys that were sitting there, and they were talking about eternity, and one said something that was so filthy I could not even tell you? The other guy, not the guy that said the filthy thing, the other guy that was there was one of the guys who asked me yesterday about being saved. It is one of those things where it was not causing me. It is because you will let yourself be used of God in a situation that the average person would look at and just say, "Now, how is God going to get anything out of that?" That is the point. God wants to get the honor and glory out of everything we do. He just does not want you and me deciding what that is. That is what we need to do.

## V. Relationship to Civil Government: Romans 13

Let us move into Romans 13 today and get going here. We have kind of got a little update and got Romans 12 recap for us. Now Romans 13, again, we are in our third section, the practical section. We begin to see our relationship to civil government. Romans 13 starts out in verse 1. It says this:

*Romans 13:1-3*

*Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.*

*Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.*

*For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same:*

Now Romans 13 starts out talking about how we get along with our government. Now we are talking about a secular government. Even back in the Founding Fathers' day, the government, even though it was very much shaped by the preaching of great men and the Bible itself, it was still a secular government, much, much more of a secular government today.

People get strange ideas about government, they really do. America is a free society. America is, for the time being anyhow, America is a free society. We have a lot of freedoms, we enjoy a lot of freedom, so that makes it good. Our motto, our political motto, is "freely oppressed." That is what we do. We like to take our form of democracy and put it into countries in the Middle East that have a totalitarian system. Our own government. I had to laugh when President Obama said a couple of weeks ago, when he was talking about the war in Libya. The war in liberty started a long time ago. Anyway, he is talking about the fact that there would be no boots on the ground, no troops on the ground. Of course, that is ludicrous.

Let me tell you something. America had troops on the ground long before anything ever happened over there. If you know anything about how the CIA works and all those people, their whole job is going in, and if they see a weak spot, it is to overthrow a government that they think is an oppressive government so they can bring in our form of government. That is why we knocked off Gaddafi, that is why Saddam Hussein. That is why we did everything we do. That is why in the last 30, 40 years, we get into everything. That is why we got into El Salvador, in Central America, Nicaragua. Long before there were boots on the ground, there were special forces on the ground, and there was CIA on the ground, and they were doing what they do best. Because in our own government's mindset, you see, we think that we have the best form of government on planet Earth. We think that when you have these oppressive governments out here, like communism or the Taliban in the Middle East, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, and all those places that when you go there, you really cannot stand. That is why they all end in "stan."

We get the idea that the great Christian thing to do is to bring them our form of democracy because really, in our mindset, we think our form of democracy is right up there with Christianity because we are a "Christian nation." Of course, that is just simply not true. It all gets mixed up. Russia is a bad government because they oppress the free, and they have no democracy; they are

a totalitarian government. The Middle East is very oppressive, so they are bad. Somehow it all gets mixed up, and we come out thinking that God grades governments and nations by how they deal with human rights. That is another issue that is really misunderstood today, the idea of human rights.

We think because we are in a free society that the freedom that we enjoy was a God-given freedom. That is just simply not true. You see, that is what happens when you take the word "free" out of the Bible, "the truth shall make you free." That is what happens when you take the word "free" or "freedom" out of the Bible and take it out of the context that it really intended to be used at, and then make it free as far as your freedom.

Human rights: if you are human here this morning, and I suspect most of you probably are, if you are human here this morning, as human rights go, you have one human right. Do you know what that human right is? That is the right to go to hell and burn in eternity for all eternity. That is the only right you have. You do not have any human rights. Human rights sounds good to a bunch of stupid Americans that do not know their own history or could not even look past their own history.

You go back in the history of the world, you go back in the history of God's people and the nation of Israel. You will find that the human rights issue is an issue that we bring up so we can impose our form of government on other people and give them freedom because we think Bible freedom is free from totalitarian systems. The Bible takes the opposition. The Bible says that no matter what government you are under, no matter what system you are under, whether it is good or it is bad, once you are saved, you are free in Christ. Then it does not matter what government you are under because you are not really under their oppression anymore. God is going to take care of you and get you through every way you can.

Now that is why we look at Russia, we think of the Cold War, we think of how terrible it was back there, and we talked about this Thursday night. But that is why in Russia, during the Cold War, under that terrible regime of system, this world saw one of the greatest revivals of millions and millions and millions of people becoming saved and becoming Christian right under the nose of the government that denied God and persecuted every Christian that claimed to know God. They did not stop a thing. Where in America, where we have the freedom, we apostatized and became a big bloated cow in a dead stream of life, and that is where we sit and stink today.

One of the funniest things I ever read was during World War II, right before D-Day. D-Day took place, the anniversary is coming up, 67 years I think this year, June 6, 1944. General Eisenhower, who was the commander of all the troops over there going into Europe, and they had not penetrated Europe yet. We landed in Africa, then we went to Sicily, but we had not penetrated the continent of Europe yet, and they knew it was coming. Right before D-Day, President Eisenhower wrote this big letter out and gave it to all the troops, and it kind of went something like this. He invoked them and told them that they were going to embark. He called it the Great Crusade, and he was telling them that what they were about to do was the hand of God, and he prayed for God's wisdom and might to strike down this great enemy, and this was a great crusade for righteousness. It had nothing to do with Bible righteousness. Basically, he was saying, "God

is on our side, we are going to go in there and kick the fire out of them, and so because God is on our side, and we are standing for right, and there is an oppressive government over there, we are going to wipe them out."

About the same time, right across the channel in France, German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, he was in charge of the defense of the West Wall. The West Wall was the wall that they built impenetrable to keep the Allies from coming ashore. It ran all the way to France, where they knew they had to come from Britain. So he gets all his guys together to have a little pep rally, and he says something like this to them. He gets up there and he tells them, "Men, I want everybody to look down at your belt buckle." Do you know what the German World War II belt buckle said? It said, "God is with us." He says, "I want you to remember what that belt buckle says as you repel these evil forces, and you remember that God is with us." It is hilarious. We thought God was on our side; he thought God was on their side. So when you read down through history, you automatically think, "Well, the guy who won must have been the guy that God was on his side." I mean, that is just the way it goes. But in this case, neither one was right. Whose side was God on? The answer is neither one.

When you begin to understand God in the Bible, and God in governments in the Bible, you know the idea is that God made all men equal. No, Smith and Wesson did, but God did not. All men are not created equal if you know your Bible. If you know history, that is not true. If you know anything about the Bible at all, you know one fact that is true, that God did not create all men equal. He took Abraham and made him better than everybody else on the planet, so he did not create them equal. Of course, it may have been that way in the Garden. Boy, it sure changed in Genesis 3. But you see, that is where we get all off track. When you look at this thing, the answer is neither one. God simply used both nations to get the Jew back to the land.

## VI. Nations as Stepping Stones in God's Plan

Most of you have been to Powell Gardens. I went to Powell Gardens many, many years ago when we used to do astronomy things there. I do not think they have this anymore, but I got there in the afternoon one time, and they had this lake, and in this lake, there was an island. On that island, it was kind of like a preserve, just not real big, probably not twice the size, maybe it was this room. But they had a lot of exotic things on it that obviously could not get off because they were on the island. But you had to get over there to get it. What they did, and it was a nice little deal, they had put stepping stones in this pond or this lake. These stones were about garbage can lid size. What you had to do is walk across these stepping stones, like 12, 14 of them, to get to this little paradise island. Once you got there, you could see all the things, and it was nice; there was all kinds of stuff there that was not back on the other side of the pond.

Many years later, I thought to myself, when I was studying church history and I was studying the history of governments and the history of the Bible, that is what God does. If you want to understand Romans 13 about governments, here is the best analogy I know. Governments down through history are like stepping stones that God uses to get to the island that is His paradise, that is His plan. God just walks on these nations and uses them for the overall purpose that God really wants to accomplish, and that is establishing His kingdom.

We get so caught up in what is going on around us, and how important we are as a nation, and how we are good, and everybody else is bad, and how we are going to hold the flag of freedom up, and everybody else is this. That has nothing to do with what God is doing. When you understand Daniel 2, you realize that Daniel says there, or God says in Daniel 2, that God removes kings and He establishes kings. It even says that God changes the times and His season to fit His own scheme of plans of what He wants to do.

*Psalms 9:17*

*The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.*

Jeremiah 25:9. Here is a great one for you to think about. The wickedest, most evil, he put Adolf Hitler and Stalin to shame. The greatest wickedest guy down through the history of the Bible was Nebuchadnezzar, and Nebuchadnezzar did more damage, did more destruction, killed more people, overcame more empires, and slaughtered them than anybody else in the 20th century. Do you know what God says in the book of Jeremiah? He says, "He is My servant." That is kind of a contradiction of terms. Oh, no, it is not when you know your Bible. God uses nations. He uses nations.

Now you take America, for example, we are talking about government here, "land of the free, home of the brave." She is where she is at, and where she is headed is all part of God's plan. Let me give you a great verse, and if you do not have this in your Bible, you want to get it out. It is in Proverbs 28:5. It is a great verse. This is America's problem. This is the world's problem.

*Proverbs 28:5*

*Evil men understand not judgment: but they that seek the LORD understand all things.*

The world looks at what is going on around them. They look at what is going on in the Middle East. The average American gets up and it grinces when they see gasoline is \$4.62 a gallon. The average person worries about this, worries about that. They go to the grocery store; it costs you twice as much to buy groceries as it did two years ago. In my neighborhood, everybody is planting gardens in the backyard. My neighbor asked me the other day, I was out there with my dog, he says, "How come you are not building a garden?" I said, "Why?" Everybody else says, "Well, you need to have." I said, "I will just steal all your guys when you go to sleep." I am just kidding. Everybody is worried, everybody is afraid. I am not saying there is not reason to be concerned to some degree.

But do you understand what is happening in America? I mean, do you? It is clear from the Bible in Jeremiah 30:11 and Zechariah 14:2 that America is going to host the Antichrist, and she is definitely going to go against the Jew. Zechariah 14:2 says that all nations are going to go up against the nation of Israel. Do you know what "all" means in the Greek? America too. America too. That great verse, "Evil men understand not judgment, but they that seek the Lord understand all things." When you know the Bible and you understand the Bible, you look at what is going on around you, what is going on through history.

World War I, World War II, you heard me say it many, many times, World War I got the land ready for the Jew, World War II got the Jew ready for the land, and they became a nation in 1948. The fact that God killed eight million Germans, 32 million Russians, 300,000 Americans, six million British, just was an afterthought. God has a plan. Down through history, nations are the stepping stones to that plan. God says, "You know what, you do not have to be afraid of them unless you do something wrong," because you are free. Real freedom does not matter whether you have the freedom to go from here to Kansas or in Russia, you do not have the freedom to go out in your backyard. Real freedom in the Bible is once you get saved, you are free in Christ Jesus. Then God is in charge of what goes on in your world. God is in charge of what goes on in your world, but we cannot get that today, we just cannot.

Yet God used this country from 1700 to 1900 to take the gospel around the world. Yet God protected her and gave her till 1950 a victory in every war she ever fought. Do you realize that we have not won a war since 1945? I mean, do you understand that? We have not won a war since 1945. 1950 came along in Korea. We never ended that war. That war, we still have boys over there on the 38th parallel. There was never an end to that fight. We are technically still at war. We drew a draw in Korea. We lost Vietnam, down and out. Somebody says, "Well, in the Gulf War, we really kicked the rear end." No, you did not. You only went so far and then you stopped. Then 10 years later, we had to go back and finish that war. We still have, we still have guys over there, but it gets your head on straight. We have not won anything. We are not winning in Afghanistan. Afghanistan, the graveyard of the nations. Do you know why we are not winning in Afghanistan, nor ever will win in Afghanistan? Because nobody can win in Afghanistan. The Russians were there for 15 years. The most ruthless, I mean, America, we do stupid things. We fight limited war. You shoot at me, I will harsh language back at you. There are boys over there right now that when they get into a bad situation, before they can return fire, they have to call and get permission. Well, that is limited war. Are the Taliban calling up and getting permission? You see, that is America's policy. We do not want any collateral damage. Well, there is always collateral. The bottom line is this: if you are stupid enough to start a war, then you better be man enough to finish it. I mean, it is just simple. They come at you with a platoon, you take a battalion. They come at you with a battalion, you take a division. They send up RPGs, send in 50 tanks. I mean, we lose because of those kinds of concepts. They lost in Afghanistan, never could get it back. We will not get it back either. We have lost every war since 1945 and cannot win the ones we are in.

We are now ready. Like it or not, or believe it or not, we are in three wars right now as we speak with a military that is stretched just as tight as they can get stretched. God will use her to get the Jew back in 1945. God will use the Jew back in 1948, and then God will clobber her for turning on the Jew in 2012 plus and going against him when Christ shows up. Do you know why? She is just one of the stepping stones in the pond of time. Do not get caught up in this great love. I love the country. I fought for it once. I fought for it again. You are not talking about who is not a patriot. I am just telling you, I know what I am dealing with here. I understand what Romans 13 says. All governments are just tools of God, good or bad. They are either vessels of honor or vessels of dishonor. You know that. God has a plan. He is going to use the nations. If they want

to go along with Him, great. If they do not, great. He is going to use those nations to get His plan established. That is where we are at with this thing.

## VII. The Coming Purging of the Church

Now on a practical side, let me just take this to a practical thing for you. I think there is a real relevance here you need to know. I think personally, this is my own personal thing now, I think personally, the church of Jesus Christ needs the great purging that is coming. I really think we do. I say that from being a student of history and being a student of the Bible. Everything in history has had its defining moment. Everything. Everybody in history in the Bible has had its defining moment. In your life, there will be a defining moment.

I see it in people's lives all the time. I see them do good, come to a point, get involved with this, get this. Then they come to something where they have to really make a hard-line decision between the way they used to be or the way they are and the way they have to really go. They come to that crossroads. They come to that defining point in their life. Some of them go past that and make it. Some of them never go any farther, and then you begin to go back. Everything has its defining moment. Everybody has their defining moment. Every church has its defining moment. Every church, period, had its defining moment. The mark of all American Christianity and the church will be the great departure of God's people from real Christianity when it hits.

Remember now, when you can go through history and study everything, you have to remember one great concept: it is the remnant concept. At any time, no matter where, down through the Bible and history, when it was all said and done, there was only a remnant of what God's people that were left were the true people. In 606 BC, there must have been three million Jews that went into the dispersion. 42,000 came back. That is a remnant. Here, when he told you at the Second Coming of Christ in Romans 11, that a remnant will be saved. What makes you think that when this thing, this church gets purged, and America, you do not think that God is going to sit by and let this country do what it has done with the Word of God? And let you and I, do you know why He is going to purge this country? It is going to get rough. Do you know why He is going to purge it?

4. He wants to weed them out. He always does that. Gideon went down one time. He had 32,000 guys. God says, "Too many." God cut them out of 10,000. Then He cut them down to 300. I will tell you something, if you want to find out where it is going in America and where you fit into that, go back to Gideon's 300 and watch how He tests the final cut. Watch how He tests the final 10,000 down to the 300. Watch the test that He gives them and what it is, and you will find out what is going to happen to American Christianity in the next, I used to say 20 years, that would be a very understated statement.

There is a remnant factor involved here. You do not think that God is going to let this country do what it has done with the Word of God, let God's people do what it has done with the Word of God, let them take what the book of Romans has been teaching us and drag it through the mud where you have, I mean, you have God's people now that I have not met a sinner for the last 10

years of my life. Nothing is a sin anymore. You can do whatever you want to do, and it is not a sin. Do you think God, who wrote that Bible, who is a holy God, is going to let that thing go?

Now that is one side of it. The other side is this: it is a good thing. Do you not want to stand up there at the judgment seat of Christ with all the cracks and all the dust and all the squeaks taken out? This purging is coming; it is going to give this church, any church, all Christians in America, around the world for that matter, the best chance we have to stand at the judgment seat of Christ and get the wrinkles pressed out here before we have to get up there. I think that is a good thing.

Now some of you right now, I just ruined your lunch. Some of you right now, you are looking for a brown baggie. Your breakfast is going to come up. But I am telling you, that is a good thing. It is a good thing when you understand that this is not what this life is about. It is a good thing to realize that every child, I do not know about you, I do not want to stand at the judgment seat of Christ with the Waldensians and the Huguenots and all those people that paid the price. I do not want to rub shoulders with them and say, "Hey, how are you doing?" They just look at me. They paid the price. There is a great purging coming, I am telling you. It has always been down through history.

Pastors today, churches today, they do not have a clue. They are out there talking about all that God is going to do and give you money for this, and we are building this, and we are moving on with this. Let me tell you, pal, you are not moving anywhere. I will tell you something, in 40 years of ministry, I have learned one thing about God's people, and I am reminded of it throughout every year of my life, and it is a true statement. If somebody would say, "What is the one thing you learned about people in ministry?" And I have learned a lot of things. You cannot work with as many people as you work with in ministry and get into their lives, get into their world, get into their problems, and not learn a lot of things. But the single greatest thing, the single, absolutely, the single greatest thing I have learned and truth I have learned about dealing with God's people, and I am reminded every year, is simply this: God's people will be just fine with God. They will be just fine with church. They will be just fine with you. They will be just fine with everything as long as everything goes their way. As long as you have what you want, as long as you get what you want, as long as nothing turns and ruins your day and nothing takes from you what you want, you are just fine with God.

I have seen some over the years, I have seen God's people get mad at God because they lost their mother or they lost their father or lost their kid or lost their brother. I have seen them develop an attitude where they quit coming to church. In so many cases, their mom and their dad was 90 years old or 80 years old. I mean, they are not going to live forever. God gave you a book that tells you how to deal with death and understand death and gave you all the promises. In many cases, honest to God, God came in before they died, and that person got saved so they would not go to hell. God cared enough to do that, and then the person dies, we are all going to die, and then the attitude Christian gets an attitude about it because God took my mom, God took my dad, God took this, God took my uncle. Well, everybody is going to die. You have to be on your knees thanking God that God allowed them to see Him as their Savior before they stepped out and read

it. Oh no, not you. Not you, no, no, no. You will get an attitude toward God because it did not go your way. I am only in Romans 13. Easter may be another whole ballgame next week.

I have seen some of God's people get mad at God because they lose their job. I feel bad about anybody that loses their job, and I will tell you what, before it goes any farther, a lot of people are going to lose their job. But you better stop and look before you cop an attitude toward God. I have watched some of God's people say, "Well, I am really mad at God because I lost my job." They had not given a dime to God in the last 20 years of their life. They cared nothing about what God, but all in their world changes. Are you not glad that God does not deal with us the way we deal with Him? How about if God got an attitude about me and you on the basis of our attitude we get with Him? We would all be dead in a week.

I have known people to get along with God and get along in church right up to the point where you have to deal with them on something in their life. We had a young lady here, we helped, and we did all kinds of things too, and she was a sweet gal, and she came in. We had some of my gals working with her, and she got hooked up with a situation that was a bad situation, was going to cause some problems in the church. I took two girls who are in this room today as my witnesses, we sat down with her, tried to help her. I tried to explain to her from the Bible why it would not work, what she needed to do. Do you know what she did? She pointed her finger at me, she said, "You are not going to tell me what to do," and got up and stomped out of here. As long as we were helping her with food or helping her with this or helping that, "Oh, I love this place." Right up to the point where you have to deal with somebody something biblically, that is American Christianity today. That is American Christianity. "I love you, I love God, I love this church, as long as I get everything I want." The moment I get caught on the carpet, the moment there is something wrong, the moment God does not jump through the hoop, I have an attitude toward God. Well, He has an attitude toward America. You better drop your attitude and pick up His.

You wait till God takes our world and turns it upside down. You wait till God's people lose everything they lose. When it hits, and it has to, it has to, it is part of the plan of God. God's people will show their true colors. It is what the old guy said years and years ago, and I have said this illustration a thousand times over the last 20 years of my life. It is probably one of the single greatest illustrations I ever heard. Old Manly Beasley, dead long time ago, died of cancer. He preached it one time, and he asked a bunch of Christians a question. He says, "What do you get when you squeeze a lemon?" And three of the deaconess ladies in the church that thought they knew everything about the Bible, who always liked to have the right Bible answer to get in point, they raised their hand, and they said, "Lemon juice." And he said, "Well, ma'am, no, that is not true." Immediately, "Mmm."

He told the story down in his neck of the woods down south someplace. This was back when they were taking off Tylenol bottle caps before they put the seals on them. People were putting poison in this Tylenol medicine. I mean, it would really fix your headache for eternity. "Take two of these, and you will not be able to call me in the morning." They were going through that. Somebody got the bright idea of taking some kind of poison and putting it in a hypodermic needle, and they were going through a produce department. "Well, this would be really easy." I hate to give you guys just because, but Joe, if it happens, you know who to start looking for

because I am telling him here. He was going with a hypodermic needle, and he was looking at the fruit, and he was injecting poison into those lemons, putting them back on the rack. After a few weeks, they had like 10 people die. He was doing it in a number of places. Manly Beasley's point was this, after he told the story. He says, "No, when you squeeze a lemon, ladies, you were right. You would think lemon juice should come out. But the truth of the matter is, when you squeeze a lemon, what is really on the inside comes out."

Then he took the application to us and he says, "What do you get when you squeeze Christians?" Do you know what you get when you squeeze Christians? You get what is really on the inside. You think when you get squeezed, Christian juice should come out. Christian juice being turning to God, staying with the Bible, staying the book. "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I may not sin against thee." But in reality, what comes out of God's people when they are squeezed is what is really on the inside. Now you are going to watch America get squeezed, American Christianity, and you are going to watch what really comes out of the inside. It is going to be quite, quite, quite, quite interesting to watch.

Do you know why America, go back to this for a second, do you know why America has not won a war since 1945? Think about it. We have bigger bombs. At the end of World War II, we dropped two bombs, one on Hiroshima, one Nagasaki. That would have scared the world to death, you would have thought. No, all that endeavored people to do is they would get more bombs. We have bombs now if you drop them, make the one on Hiroshima look like a firecracker on the sidewalk, 4th of July. I mean, that was an atom bomb. Now we have plutonium bombs. Now we have uranium bombs. Now we have big bombs. I mean, those things will blow up the world. Now back then, they had to have guys, fighter pilots fly things in. They do not even do that anymore. They have drones. There is somebody in Washington, D.C., or down in Langley or somewhere where they are at, they will be sitting at a console, and they will be taking off a drone aircraft over in Afghanistan someplace, loaded with Hellfire missiles, and they are 3,000, 4,000 miles away in an air-conditioned room, drinking a latte from a Starbucks, and they are flying that sucker in, and they are blowing up things over in Afghanistan and over there in the Middle East with drones that are not even piloted anymore.

We have tanks now that can fire and laser-guided plutonium ammunition that will just, you can fire on the run. You can go 60 miles an hour and fire your gun and never miss your target. Incredible. Have you ever seen now all the American troops over there, they all have those things on their helmets? Do you know what those are for? Those are night goggles. You can go out in the blackest night, flip that down, and see everybody out there. Did not have that in World War II. You had to go, "Hey Joe, go out and see what is out there." If Joe did not come back, you knew what was out there. We have great technology. We have some of the greatest weapons in the world. Do you know they have a gun now that will shoot around a corner? If you stand here, somebody is over here, and it breaks here, you put it across, and it has an LCD television screen with crosshairs on it that you can shoot around a corner. Now you laugh. That is a neat thing. We have stuff we can blow up, we can kill better than we have ever killed in life.

Over in Afghanistan, they are still using bolt action Enfields. We have smart bombs. Do you know what they do? They go get our 155 shells, buy them off eBay, put them down along the

road, sit over here in a Starbucks with a latte, everybody, we blow up half a truck. We spend a million dollars apiece on Hellfire missiles. They go find an old World War II 155 shell, put it in the ground, put some nails around it, and put some splinter barbed wire around it, sit over here with a cell phone, and we just met one last number. Latte. We have drones, man. Do you know why we cannot win a war with all that stuff? Because technological stuff does not win wars. Do you know why we do not win any wars? We do not have the will to win any wars anymore. We do not have the will to win. We do not have the will to win anything. We want a limited war. We want a war without casualties. I am going to tell you something. You cannot win a war without having a will to win. You just cannot.

I will tell you what, that thing has moved right into Christianity. Do you know why you do not stand for God? Do you know why when this thing comes that most of God's people will leave Him so fast their head will spin? Do you know why? Because the bottom line, I mean, you have more cassettes, you have more Bibles, you have more tapes, you have more books, you have access to the internet, you can find more about God out today than a man could find out in his lifetime 300 years ago. We are just like the military. They have great stuff to blow the world up. We have great stuff to find God. But neither one of us do, do you know why? Because in both cases, we have lost our will to fight, and God's people have lost their will to have a relationship with God. You want it on your terms. We want to win the war on our terms. No, no, no, no, it will not work that way. It will not work that way.

Somebody says, "Oh, I will stand for God when it comes." My God, man, you cannot even give up cigarettes for Him now. Somebody says, "Oh, I will stand." You cannot even do what is right with your family. Somebody says, "Oh," you cannot even take a stand publicly and work with your friends. You are going to stand in. American Christians have lost their will. Somebody has to sacrifice and pay the price for all that we have. That is why I will do whatever I have to do to send these boys over there. I love them. I will keep their honor alive as long as I can. I appreciate. I know it is an old cliché, and it is a talking point, and everybody has heard it, but freedom is not free. Somebody paid the price. Somebody paid the price.

I saw the little kids all around there, not necessarily ours, but all the little kids. I do not know if you noticed that yesterday, there was another guy at 93 years old. He is in a rest home. He was in the first Paramarine Division in World War II, fought on Guadalcanal in 1942, fought up through Peleliu, and fought then on Iwo Jima, was wounded. 93 years old, still wears his World War II uniform to every event. There is another guy there was in the 9th Armored Division, first group with the Bridge of Remagen that went over into Germany. He is 92, he is in a rest home. He wears his uniform every time there is one of those events. I would go around to some of the people, and I would send them to the older kids, and I would say, "See that guy down there?" I would say, "You know what? You have to go down and shake his hand and thank him for what he has done." And the kid said, "Why?" And I said, "Because that guy there in the first Marine patch on his shoulder, he is the reason why you are not speaking Japanese today. This guy over here is the reason why you are not speaking German." Do you know what those kids do? They do nothing with it. They do not care. They do not care at all. Now give me, you had to get the one kid I had to almost blow his iPod earphones out of his ear to even talk to him. We have lost our

will. We have lost that. America has lost its will to win, and God's people have lost their will to do what is right.

Somebody always has to pay the price. I am telling you, if you are a family, you have a family, you know what, somebody has to lead them. Somebody has to do what is right. Somebody has to pay the tab. Somebody had to pay the tab in World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and even pay the tab today for you and I to have the freedoms that we have and for your family to enjoy the freedom in Christ Jesus and have the opportunity to grow and to have what is coming at them, have a foundation of life. Somebody has to pay that tab. In churches, somebody has to pay the price for other people to find a freedom in Christ that you and I have. Everybody just cannot sit around and let somebody else do it. But when the great purging comes, when a great time comes that it really, really, really costs you something, that coming to church and all the things that you do now are really going to inconvenience your world. You watch what happens with God's people. That yellow stripe down your back is not so much that you are a coward, it is just a fact that you are in the middle of the road, and that is the line marker. You cannot be in the middle of the road. You get on one side or the other. What Jesus Christ said about the Laodicean church, the middle of the road church, lukewarm, He says, "You make Me sick." That is what we have today. When push comes to shove, there will be a lot of God's people that want to do what is right. I believe that, but do you know why they will not be able to? Do you know why they will get swallowed up? They will get swallowed up because of the time they had to build that foundation in their life. It is like that old story in the Bible. A man builds his home in the sand, one builds his home on the rock. When the winds come, what happened to the one on the sand? He got washed away. What happened to the one on the rock? It stood. Your life will stand if right now you are seeing what is coming and building into your life that foundation.

There will be some of God's people that did not want to do it. They just will not be able to do it. There will be some of God's people that do not care anything about it. Coming to church is just a, it is a, you have some other motive to be here today. When the push comes to shove, you will find a better deal. It will just push you right out of the way. That is the way it is going to be all across Christianity because it is coming. When you understand that Romans 13 says it does not matter where our government goes, how bad it gets, it does not matter what happens. Once you understand that America, like every other nation, is just a stepping stone by which God is stepping on through time, through history, to get where His kingdom was established, you realize where you and I are at in this and what our job is.

I would project that for the most part, church would probably pretty much stay intact. We stay intact now. Not much shakes this church. It is like anything, any tree, when a long wind blows, the leaves that get blown off first are the ones that are way out there and living by themselves. That always happens. But for the core part of this, there are men and women who love the book and love God. I understand that in any church, no matter how good it is, you will have some. I am saying, we will still get the job done. I believe that. I mean, we find, but you are always going to have people that when it does not go their way, it does not go right, they lose this or they lose that or this happens to them. The first one they blame is God, and "I am not going back

to church because God did this to me." Yeah, well, then go someplace else and watch that storm brewing on the horizon because it is coming your way. It is coming your way.

## VIII.Liberty in Christ: Romans 14

Now Romans 14, now you can all breathe a sigh of relief. Romans 14 doctrinally deals with our view of other Christians within our ministry. I gave you a great verse last week, and I hope you marked it down. If you did not mark it down now, John 16:15. He talks about that God has ordained you to go and bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain.

We have a tremendous responsibility in this church, any church, to take care of those that just got saved. I told the story, a couple of guys this week were talking about how the Kansas City Star, a number of years ago, they enacted a law, and now if a woman has a baby that she does not want, instead of leaving it in a trash can someplace, which is really what prompted this, putting it in a trash bag someplace or leaving it out to die or killing it or whatever, all you have to do now is take it to a fire station or a hospital or a police station, no questions asked, leave it there and go. Obviously, they thought that was better to save that baby's life than to have the baby die just because somebody was afraid that they had a baby they did not want. But most people look at that and they think that is a terrible thing, that is a tragic thing, and it is, no question about it.

But God's people do the same thing. We get people saved, and then we just leave them on somebody else's doorstep to take care of them. We do not train them up, we do not grow them up, we do not do anything with them. I grew up 30 years in that system. I grew up 30 years in a system where they wanted to get them to come to church, brag about how great it was, get everybody there, but once they got saved, they wanted nothing to do with them, and they just left them to die on the vine. This church tries to ensure that if you truly get saved, you have everything you need to ensure your spiritual growth. From basic discipleship, to Bible studies, to Bible basics, to prayer groups, to one-on-one, all the people you need as a support group, whatever you need.

We have a great elementary division back there, and I love those kids. We had a great time at Chuck E. Cheese last Monday, and I think those things are important when we get to spend time with the kids. It was a great family night, and those things are really important. But every church needs to have two elementary divisions. You need to have one for the little kids and then have one for the young Christians, and you help them grow. The bottom line of Romans 14 is God's people should help other Christians, not hurt them. This is a tremendous chapter in understanding what in the Bible is called our liberty in Christ.

In the chapter, it is real simple things. You have one story about a guy who is a vegetarian, a young Christian. Somebody else is an older Christian, and the guy that is a young Christian thinks that real Christians do not eat meat. They have to just eat vegetables. Of course, the older Christian, he understands that that is goofy. That is not in the Bible. You can eat whatever you want, whatever God, whatever you can thank God for, you can eat. But it makes the point that you want to be careful because this young guy has not come along yet that he can stand at, so

you do not want to do something in front of him or hurt him to the place where it hinders him in his faith. You have to bring him along.

The other story found in there is about holy days. He talks about how some people look at Sunday as a special day of the week. Somebody else looks at it like every other day of the week. You do not get into doctrinal arguments and make issues over things like that. He says every man who esteems a day to his own self, every man rises before his own God. You know what, you figured out what it is. It is not a doctrinal issue. I have many personal convictions in my life that I have built over the years just for who I am and where I have come from, and everybody does them. Both people are not smart enough to keep them to themselves. There are a lot of things that I do not like in Christianity. There are a lot of things that I see people do that I do not care for, that I would not do. But it is not a doctrinal thing. It is a conviction. So I do not preach on them. Many pastors do preach on it. I think that gets you in trouble. If it is not in the Bible and it is not a doctrinal issue, it is your business, it is not my business. I may not do it, I may not like it, but that is my personal conviction. That is my preference. That is not a doctrinal thing. You have to learn to do that.

I am old school, I look at things, especially in music. I think everybody here does a wonderful job in music, but I look around Christianity, and some things just drive me nuts. I say very little about it. If I am talking to somebody and they are going to this church over here, and I know all about their music and how stupid the whole thing is, I can rattle up. I do not even bring it up. I just say, "Well, you know what? I am happy for you. Good guy, see you later."

Remember, the number one rule of thumb in all that we do, Romans 14, and he makes this point. This is the key verse in this chapter, Romans 14:10. He says this:

*Romans 14:10*

*But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.*

That is where we are all going to give our greatest account. That is why I am not worried about when somebody gets into something that they do that does not conflict with the Bible, not an issue of doctrinal thing. I am going to have my own issues at the judgment seat of Christ. I do not need to be involved myself into yours. If it is not biblically based and is not an issue that has to deal with the Bible, then it is something that is between you and God, and you will have to grow through it or grow out of it or whatever we want to do with it. But that is a great chapter in understanding those concepts.

He says in Galatians 5:13:

*Galatians 5:13*

*For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.*

1 Peter 2:16 says:

*1 Peter 2:16*

*As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.*

Of course, the reason why we are to do that and the reason why we are to follow that is because the Bible says in Romans 14:7-8, there is always somebody watching our lives. There is always somebody watching what you do. The key verse, I guess, is found in 2 Corinthians 3:17. If you want to understand what real liberty is, liberty of Christ was not given so you and I could do what we wanted to do. It was given that we could do for God what God had called us to do.

*2 Corinthians 3:17*

*Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.*

Biblical liberty in Christ is you walking in the Spirit of God following what the principles say.

## IX. Grace and Truth: Romans 15

Then we have Romans 15, the great practical application of all we have learned in the Bible. The Bible puts forth two great practical character qualities. When we have the Bible working in us, these are the furnishings we talked about a couple of weeks ago, then these two elements are also in us, and they are at work in us. These two great qualities of God are found in John 1:17. This is a great practical approach to what we are learning so far, how to apply it. He says in verse 17:

*John 1:17*

*For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.*

In the Christian world today, you usually find Christians, churches, and pastors that have one of two ways, and neither of them are right. You find those who have grace but they have no truth. Then you have those that have truth and they have no grace. The balance for us is the balance that Christ had, by which, I might add, He established the church. That simply is that we have the truth, but we have to have grace in how we give out the truth.

Self-righteousness is a tough thing with a lot of young Christians. They do not mean to get that way. The key is that they do not stay that way. But they have a tendency once they get a hold of the truth, and many times they come out of bad situations themselves. Should they get the truth, they hold on to that truth because they are young, and they do not really know how to use the truth. They view everything else that everybody else does in a judgmental sort of way. That turns into a self-righteous attitude.

The best way you can overcome a self-righteous attitude in anything, I will give you the simple formula for it. It is just simply this: if you have a self-righteous attitude, you look at other people and are judgmental of them. Here is the way to fix that: just stop and think, all the time, "God should have killed you this week." I think one of us ought to be here today, and I think you are all good people. But I will tell you this, compared to a holy God, we are nothing. When you understand God and who He is and what He expects, let me just tell you something, pal. If it was not for the grace of God and God taking care of us and putting up with some stuff on us, we

would have been in an empty church this morning. We should have never gotten saved in the first place. Go back to that human rights thing. We should have never got saved in the first place. God, a holy God, what does He want with somebody like me?

When you start to get to the place that you get self-righteous, you want to overcome it, you just give people the same grace God has given you. You realize that you are far from perfect. You still make mistakes. God does not come down and cut your legs off in a car wreck, so you just put up with it. You realize that people have to grow. But you put it in a context of seeing how God gives you grace. Because it is real easy to step out of that, and once you have got the truth, you think that everybody should have it like you got it. Well, maybe they should in a perfect world, but in a perfect world, we would all be in hell anyhow, so it would not make any difference. Not a perfect world. Thank God that we have the truth, but we also have grace. You give people the truth that God gave you the truth. But how many years did it take for you and for me to get right with God that God put up with us before He should have come down? If He was a righteous God, what He should have done is come down and told me one time, waited 30 seconds, and then killed me. He waited 19 years in my case. In each life out there, you know how long He waited for you. It is not a matter of the truth; it is a matter of realizing that, yes, you have the truth, but you have to have the grace to use the truth. So when it comes to other people, just give them the same grace that God gave yourself. You do not even need a verse in the Bible out of you. You do not even need a type in the Bible. You be the type. God gave you the grace to put up with you, but He gave you the truth, give it to them.

Romans 15 opens with a great Bible verse, and most of you have these already when we came through Romans a while back. But I will say it in time, I get the opportunity to say it. To me, it is one of the most versatile verses in the Bible that fits in just about everything that you do.

*Romans 15:1*

*We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.*

Within this chapter, there are seven character qualities of grace and truth in our lives.

- > Verse 1: A strong Christian helps other people, does not please himself.
- > Verse 2: A strong Christian edifies other people. That means lifts up, leaves them better than you find them.
- > Verse 2: Strong Christians please other people, not in a man-pleasing way, but doing things that help people, pleasing them, finding out what their needs are.
- > Verse 7: Strong Christians receive other people. That means you take them in, make them one of your family, take them in, help them out.
- > Verse 14: A strong Christian admonishes other people.
- > Verse 27: A strong Christian ministers to other people.
- > Verse 20: A strong Christian prays for other people.

See those things? Those are the seven character qualities that are in Christ. Those are the seven character qualities that are a mark of a spiritual Christian. When you take those seven things and you wrap them around verse 1, "You that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak."

How many times have I dealt in every kind of problem that you could have, problem between two Christians, problem between a husband and wife, problem between a child and a mom or a dad, whatever. Relationships always have issues. I always think to myself, sometimes they are way past the point of this verse, but I always think to myself, "You know what? This whole thing could have been stopped, and everybody would have got to this part if somebody would have just followed Romans 15:1."

Dad, if it is your family, you ought to be the one who implies Romans 15:1. You that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak. If you are in ministry, then as a pastor or a leader, then that verse needs to fit in everything that you do. You that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak. We are not in this to please ourselves. We are not in this to please ourselves. We are in this to please God and help people get where they need to get. In a perfect world, I would like everybody to be right where they need to be, but we do not live in a perfect world, and that will never happen. So we have got to take them where they are at. But you that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak. If you want to ask yourself where you are at and how you are doing with the Lord, you can ask yourself one simple question: "Whose infirmity are you bearing right now to help them?" That is a good question. That is a good question.

## X. Paul's Closing and the Mystery of the Church: Romans 16

All right, Romans 16. The close of Paul's letter. Let me give you a little information here that this is something you want to take away and remember. Paul always follows a signature format in how he closes his letters. It is a very unique style, kind of like his telltale trademark of his writings. The book of Hebrews is a great mystery in all the great theological minds. Who wrote Hebrews? Because there is not a name. It does not take anybody with a brain to figure out who wrote Hebrews when you read the last chapter of Hebrews. It is Paul's telltale signature all through the book. Paul closes all his books the same way. You may have a problem if it is not listed like in Hebrews wondering who wrote it, but when you read the last chapter, no question who wrote it, because it ends just like 1st and 2nd Timothy, Corinthians, and everything else he writes, and Romans.

Romans 16, I think, for me personally, and this will help you, some of you guys down the line, it ought to help everybody. It reveals a wealth of great biblical principles for us in dealing with people and in our own personal lives. Now, the first thing that strikes me out of here, and I never forget this, I think this probably impacts me more than anything else that I have learned about Paul. Being in the same business that he is in, it means probably more to me than maybe it does to you. But when I come down through all of his books, when he ends, do you know what strikes me? Paul never forgets the people who got his heart and helped him in their ministry. He takes time at the end of each letter, they call it saluting in the Bible, that is greetings. But he takes time in every letter to talk about the people that God put in his world that picked up his heart, that picked up his ministry, and did for him and helped him do what God had called him to do. Paul knew those people were very special. He knew, as I knew and have learned, that they are sent to you by God.

The process is that God will put a burden in a man's heart. Someday, some of you guys will get that burden, and God will do something with you and maybe take you someplace and do something with you, as He did with me as a young man. What happens is that He will put you in a place, and He will call you to do something, and you will start to do it, and then one by one, the hand, the way that God does it, I would love to write a book on it, but I do not even know how to describe it. I could not even put it into words. It is something that I understand it in concept, but when I try to explain it, I just fall short every time, and I am sure I will this morning. But He will bring people to you. He will bring people to you that will grasp your heart, grasp your vision. He will bring people to you, and He will give them, they will grasp, they will see. They are people that are looking for what they want to do with God, just like you have something to do for God. He kind of matches them up. He will bring people into your world, and He will bring people, and He will join them to you for the ministry together in the ministry.

You will see that down through Romans 16:1-16. In the first 16 verses, he talks about all of those people. These people will get your mindset. They will get your burden. These people will help you duplicate yourself in ministry. These people will, I mean, you always have, I mean, many people come through the door. We have been here now almost eight years, and we have had a lot of people tread through the doors, but not very many people really get the heart and pick up the banner and pick up the mantle and pick up the cross and carry it out through the aspect of ministry. Very few will take up the cross, the burden, and do what it needs to be done. Paul never forgot those people, those people that God sent to him, that were his co-laborers, that they worked together, that they understood his heart, his mind, the way he did things. They understand what he was trying to do, and they actually got with him and said, "I recognize what God is doing in your life, I understand what God has called you to do. I am here to help you get that done." They are invaluable, and he understands that.

Many times, I have looked at Aquila and Priscilla. They are one of the first people I want to meet when I go to heaven. They are a husband and wife team. They obviously were won to Christ by Paul. They have a church in their home, the Bible says. I know they are solid people because over in Acts 18, when Apollos gets screwed up on his doctrine and he comes to their church on a Sunday morning and he gets up and starts giving his testimony and he starts talking about John's baptism, the lady, Priscilla, takes him aside and explains to him the Word of God more perfectly. They knew their Bible, neat couple, neat couple. There is somebody that when Paul started what he did, God gave them to him. There is a lasting love relationship between Aquila and Priscilla.

Phoebe is another one. She is really the first one in verse 1. Here is a great illustration for this. Phoebe is probably the maddest person in heaven right now. Anybody know why? Why is Phoebe up in heaven just snorting right now? She is cheering me on because she wants me to clear the air about Phoebe. Anybody know? Yes. She is called a deaconess. That is right, Kyle. Phoebe is given a designation of being the first woman deacon in the Bible. From that, we have churches today that have women deacons. Now, this is a great example. This is something you want to learn from. Why do we not have women deacons in our church? One, the Bible says not to, other than that. Somebody says, "Well, here," and if you have an NIV down underneath the little notes, it will say Phoebe the first deaconess. The Bible never calls her a deaconess. The

Bible does not land her within 500 words on either page in every chapter of being a deaconess. She has nothing to do with deaconess.

Remember I taught you the book of Acts? Remember I taught you how that is your, the history of how you learn from all these stuff. Remember I taught you how the two lines of the Bible, remember, and where did the bad line go back to? Where did the bad line go back to? Alexandria, Egypt. So, when somebody talks about Phoebe being a first deaconess, and who was the great guy down in Alexandria, Egypt? One of them was who? Origen, who was the guy before him? Clement. Okay, that is enough. There is one or two I need. You start reading about Phoebe being a deaconess, and somebody says, "Well, the Bible, she is a deaconess." You say, "Well, where is that in the Bible?" "Well, it is not in the Bible, but the early church fathers talked that, so the church accepts it." You ask them who the early church fathers is. Do you know who were the first two guys who teach that Phoebe is a deaconess? It is Clement of Alexandria and Origen of Alexandria, Egypt. When you know your true line, like I taught you, that you obviously did not do anything with, when you hear something like that, you do not have to wonder about where it is. Like I told you last week about how could you be, how could you have any spiritual brain cells and be a Calvinist once you knew that John Calvin was neither part of the true line going back to Antioch? You have to be an idiot. You are an educated idiot, but you are an idiot. Phoebe is a great lady, but she is not a deaconess.

Then in verse 7, it says, "Andronicus and Junia." Now this is a good one. Some of our hyper-Calvinist brethren, they teach that the church did not start till Paul. Some of the hyper, hyper-Calvinists teach that the church did not start till Acts 28. You get that kind of heresy. It is little verses like this. Zach, you got that verse right there? In the rear? Yes.

*Romans 16:7*

*Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.*

See that verse right there? Do you know what he just told you? He just blew the hyper-Calvinist right out of the water. He told you those two people were in Christ before he was. That is the church. That book is something else, man. You do not need these idiots out here telling you what it is. If you just believe the book God gave you, there are two people that were in Christ before Paul, and he started the church, and they were in Christ before he was. That term "in Christ" means in the church, by the way, if you have not figured it out. But you see, they do not understand. The book of Acts unfolds itself. You have Mary, you have Rufus, you have Urbane, Hermas, Julia, some 27 people by name who never forget. Paul never forgets the people God sends him. He never forgot the people who got his heart, and as a leader, as a pastor, you never forget the key people who labor with you. People who pick up the thing and get your heart. Stay with it. Do what needs to be done. Recognize that this church is a ministry, and one person cannot do it.

Then there is an interesting thing. The second thing here, I think, is really interesting. That is the fact that Paul also never forgot those who tried to hurt his work. Look at verse 17.

*Romans 16:17-18*

*Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.*

*For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.*

You see, it is just a Bible fact. You had the 12 apostles, and Judas was there. Paul works in what he did, and he lists a number of people. Alexander the coppersmith did him much evil. Several people throughout his ministry. Then you come to 3 John. The Apostle John follows the same format where he faces the same kind of people, and he writes 3 John about Gaius, who is a servant in the truth, faithful in ministry, and Diotrephes, who is evil by pride and wants the preeminence of men. He even struggled with them. He says in 3 John 1:10:

*3 John 1:10*

*Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.*

There is a reason why Paul says to mark them. People cause problems in ministry for about four different reasons I have learned over the years.

5. You have people who try to undermine what you do. Sometimes they do it on purpose. Sometimes they are just spiritual babies that have never grown up, and they like the authority. They like the preeminence of men. They are always cutting your legs up behind your back. They are always, you say something to do something. They say, "Well, I do not like that. That is not the way it should be done." I have had people all the time through my ministry, and I told them what to do. Then they did it someplace else. I asked them, and they said, "Well, I did not like the way you wanted to do it. I thought this was better." My thing to them is real simple. Look, you know what? When you pastor your own church, you can run it any way you want to run it. You can do it any way you want to do. As long as you are in this one, under my authority, you are going to do it where I tell you to do it. But you are going to find people like that. They always think they know more about it than you do. If you do, go start your own church. I am all for you, man. You can hold roll call in a phone booth, a small Volkswagen with groceries in the backseat and your dog on the other side.
6. You get people who get out of fellowship, and they stop growing. They get disgruntled. You can always watch people, and it is a time-proven thing. You can always watch people when they start to fade away. Bible study on Thursday nights becomes not important to them. They get out of ministry. They do not do this, they do not do that. Suddenly they just start missing, and then they get upset about something. It is the way it goes.
7. You have some who just fall into sin. Just fall into sin. They will get out there, and they will just make a blunder or something. They never really grounded, and they will get into some big mess. Sometimes it is a past sin; it has been a problem. Many times they had problems

with drinking or drugs before. So they will just fall off the wagon and go back to that, and down they go. I mean, that is just part of it, just the way it is.

8. Then you have some that are definitely satanic implants. I do not think probably in my lifetime, my ministry, I have had anybody like that. I had one guy one time years ago that I thought was probably demon possessed. He could come, and he had all kinds of screwy ideas and all kinds of things. He did not, but God always had a way of taking it. This guy went down under the bridge downtown someplace. I do not know where he got it, but he got a bottle of laughing gas and put it on his car and committed suicide with laughing gas. I guess that is kind of a good way to go out, laughing. Police officers found his Bible in his car. Had my name in the front with the phone number. Called me, had to go down and identify the body. You are still laughing. No, I was not. It is a thing where it happens. It is a thing where people, it just happens. It is just part of the ministry. But Paul never forgot. The reason why he never forgot is because you never want to lose your guard down. You always want to know that there are always going to be people out there that want to help you, and there are always going to be people who want to hurt you. You always focus on the ones who want to help you.

Then the last thing in Romans 16, I think, probably ties it all together. This is the last thing he says in Romans 16. Remember now the gospel, we saw that. The book of Acts, the transition, now the book of Romans. It is in verses 25 through 27 that he tells us about the mystery. He says this:

*Romans 16:25-27*

*Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,*

*But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:*

*To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.*

That verse tells you right there that he tells us about the mystery. He says this mystery was kept secret since the world began. This is the mystery of the church. This is what Paul's ministry was to reveal. This puts it all into context for us. We saw Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, how the historical thing developed itself. We saw it all change in Acts 7, and then the transition began. We saw Paul say in Acts 9, and then he begins to establish the churches. We now put Romans in the right place there where the church gets its declaration of independence, where it gets itself all laid out what it believes. On these principles we stand. We now know that God has made them known to all nations for the obedience of faith. It is made manifest by the scriptures of the prophets according to the commandment of the everlasting God. So now he closes that book finally, and he lays out for us that this book and his ministry has now fully revealed that mystery. You will find that mystery talked about again in Ephesians 5. It is one of the seven mysteries in the Bible. This one is called the mystery of the body of Christ or the mystery of the church. Paul now lays it all out.

So you will want to get all that down in some kind of, you have a great opportunity now to get Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in the right perspective, Acts in the right perspective, Book of Romans in the right perspective. Now we close the Book of Romans. You see that he ends the book by declaring that it was him that God gave the body mystery to. Notice he says up there in verse 25, "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel." It is only Paul's gospel that he says "my gospel" in the aspect that he understands that God gave it to him. Just like this church is my church, only because God gave it to me. So the next time somebody says, "Well, you just think that is your church or that is Bob's church," you are absolutely right. Just like Paul said that it was his gospel. It was no more his gospel than this is my church. But it was his because of the fact that it became his life like this church has become mine. When you get a life, you have your own church. It is just that simple.

All right, the Book of Romans. What a great book that is. Do not forget throughout the week, Thursday night Bible study, get your stuff taken care of back there and with the volleyball.