

Eternity Daily Bible Study

Romans 9-16 The Implications of Salvation

I am looking for preaching opportunities in churches in Southern California – if you know of any that might be interested please email me at johnd@aibi.ph

Number: 623

Verses: Romans 15:14

Topic: Lay Leadership

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Romans 15:14 MKJV *And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brothers, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.*

Paul writes to the Roman church and:

1. addresses them as equals, even as brothers
2. says they are full of goodness
3. acknowledges they are knowledgeable
4. and are "able to admonish one another" - that is to exercise spiritual discernment and appropriate personal and teaching ministry

In other words Paul, while being an apostle with a deep revelation of God, does not see himself as "the expert" . Paul gives his readers due credit because he knew that the same Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ that was in him - was also in them.

This raises the whole question of the appropriateness of lay ministry and the role of full-time ministers of the gospel. Paul is clear about two things here a) lay ministers can be able, trustworthy and knowledgeable b) that apostles (and other full-time workers) have a special authority that allows Paul to write the epistle in the first place.

I have known many good solid deacons and elders who do a very faithful job of leading bible studies and discipling young Christians. Mature Christians should not be stifled but should be allowed to use their gifts in a worthy manner. On the other hand the lay ministers are not theologians or missionaries or evangelists – and most will readily and openly acknowledge that. There are still some high-level jobs that do require years of solid theological training whether we like it or not.

However the most common failing is a failure to train, equip and send lay ministers into the Harvest. We "professionals" tend to keep things to ourselves. Or we demand too much training and then give too little responsibility to very capable people. Our egos can be easily threatened by highly capable lay leaders.

Yet revival and the training of non-ordained ministers of the gospel go hand in hand throughout Church history. As the saints are "equipped for the work of the ministry" (Ephesians 4:11) much more ministry gets carried out.

We also need to define "ministry" in much broader terms. It is not just what happens for ninety minutes on a Sunday morning in a church building. Writing a devotional on the Internet or having a Christian blog or handing out tracts is also ministry as is feeding the

homeless, visiting the sick, meeting one on one with new believers, and a host of other things such as ministry to shut-ins, singles and the elderly. While only a few people can preach or lead worship on Sunday, every mature Christian can have one of these other kinds of ministries in the "outside world" and this expansion outside the church walls is what brings revival to the city.

If the Roman believers were so capable – why then did Paul write his epistle to them? Because good, deep, solid training that is both theological (Romans 1-8), situational (Romans 9-11) and practical (Romans 12-16) is a key component for equipping the laity to minister skilfully and well.

Campus Crusade came up with the idea of Transferable Concepts – ten booklets that simply explained key theological and practical concepts such as assurance of salvation, praying the Spirit, loving in the Spirit and so forth so that average folk who could be trained and then transfer this training on to others.

2 Timothy 2:2 MKJV *And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit the same to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.*

Many others since then have come up with various training tools that help believers to mature in their faith and to go out and "do the stuff" of ministry. (Personal plug: you will find many such tools on the AIBI website at www.aibi.ph)

Can we then dispense with the M.Div. And higher level training? Not at all, it still has its place especially when major controversies arise and expert opinions are needed or when the faith needs defending from error.

However "lay people" can be knowledgeable, discerning, and full of goodness (virtue is not exclusively limited to the clergy PTL!) and able to admonish and correct people (sometimes even including the pastor!). They should be trained up and unleashed to reach the lost, visit the sick, help the widows and so on and so forth. They do not need to be up front on Sunday morning, indeed that sort of attention can ruin a new Christian, but they do need to exercise their faith and use their spiritual gifts. If the silent majority can be carefully trained, step by step, and motivated, prayed for and sent out into the community then a might revival might just sweep across the land!

Some things ALL Christians should be trained in are:

1. Prayer and intercession - especially how to pray for the lost and for their nation
2. Deliverance – casting out of demons and praying for the sick as the elders in James were required to do. As they pray for their friends and family many members will be added to the church!
3. Witnessing – how to share their faith in the power of the Holy Spirit and how to teach new converts the basics of the Christian faith (Priscilla and Aquila)
4. Acts of compassion – how to wisely and effectively help folk who need it most (as Dorcas did)

Imagine the impact as hundreds of prayed up, Spirit-filled believers, full of goodness and wisdom go out into your community to minister in the name of Jesus!

Blessings,

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