

I. Introduction and review: The beginning of the end.

II. You are a mature church. v. 14

A. Paul exemplifies the heart of a shepherd.

1. He refers to them affectionately: my brothers.
2. He is sensitive to possible misunderstandings: he wants to make it clear he is not calling their spiritual maturity into question.
3. He treats them with respect.
4. He offers sincere encouragement where it is due. 1:8 16:19
5. It is biblical to commend godliness. 1:8 16:19 I Co. 11:2 I Th. 1:2-10 Rev. 2-3

B. The church in Rome possesses three qualities of a mature fellowship. 1:8 16:19

1. They are full of goodness. Ga. 5:22
2. They are knowledgeable. Col. 2:2-3
3. They are able to admonish one another (see below). Co. 3:16 I Th. 5:14 Heb. 5:12

C. What kind of reputation do we have?

D. How can Paul say we are good in light of his earlier teaching about sin?

1. By nature we were bad, ignorant, and unable: totally depraved. 1:29 3:10-18,23 8:7-8 Jo. 6:44 8:43 I Co. 2:14
2. Through our union with Christ we have been transformed. 6:6-7,11 Eph. 2:10 Ga. 5:22 I Ti. 1:15 II Co. 5:17
3. If one remains unchanged after professing faith, he is not yet truly converted.

III. You still need to be reminded of the great truths of our faith. v. 15a

A. Paul assumes the Roman believers are familiar with the great truths of this Epistle.

B. Reminder is the essence of Christian instruction. II Pe. 1:12-15 I Co. 4:17 II Ti. 2:8

1. Those who are constantly seeking some new teaching are at risk of slipping into error. Acts 17:16-21 Js. 3:1f Gal. 1:6-8 II Ti. 4:3-4
2. We quickly forget what we once knew. Gal. 3:1f 4:15,21 5:7
3. God wants us to be reminded of the important truths.

IV. God has called me to minister to you. v. 15b-16a

A. The Lord has graciously appointed Paul apostle to the Gentiles. v. 15b 1:5 11:13 12:3 Acts 9:15-16 22:21 26:15-18 Eph. 3:7-9 I Co. 9:16 15:9-10

B. Though Paul did not found the church in Rome, they are part of his apostolic field.

V. You are competent to counsel one another. v. 14

A. God has given the church all the resources we need to help people with their spiritual problems. II Pe. 1:3f II Ti. 3:16-17 Ps. 19:7-14 Heb. 4:12

1. While physical problems may need medical attention, spiritual problems require spiritual solutions.
2. The Scripture is sufficient to help people with spiritual problems. II Ti. 3:16-17
3. It is our responsibility to lovingly and biblically confront the sin which is at the root of spiritual problems.

- B. Every Christian is a counselor. Heb. 10:24-25 Js. 5:19-20 Mt. 18:15f**
1. Counseling is not reserved for a small group of professionals or clergy.
 2. This is consistent with the body life in the church. Col. 3:16 I Th. 5:14 Eph. 4:16
 3. You are a counselor. The question is whether you are a good one.
 4. Some are especially called and gifted as counselors. Acts 20:31 I Th. 5:12 Co. 1:28
 5. You also must be willing to receive counsel (admonition). Pr. 12:15 19:20
- C. The qualifications to counsel are spiritual. v. 14a**
1. Personal holiness: spiritual maturity. Gal. 6:1-2
 2. Knowledge of the infallible and all sufficient Scriptures. II Ti. 3:16-17
 3. Qualifications do not include formal degrees or certification.
 4. Unbelievers are unable to help people with spiritual problems. 8:6-8 I Co. 2:14
- D. Why can't humanistic psychology help people?**
1. Secular psychology is opposed to the wisdom of the Scriptures. Col. 2:8-9
 - a. A competing religious worldview.
 - b. A false view of man, morality and salvation. 3:10f Ge. 1:26f I Jo. 1:9 Pr. 14:12
 - c. Unable to help with spiritual problems . 8:5-8 Jo. 15:5 Jer. 17:9
 2. Can Christian Psychologists combine the best of both worlds? II Co. 6:14-18
 - a. They deny the sufficiency of Scripture. Lev. 18:3f Col. 2:3,8-10
 - b. They tend to rely on their psychological training. Mark 12:31 II Ti. 3:2
 - c. What we need is experts in the Bible.
 3. Why might it be beneficial to learn about secular psychology?
- E. How does Biblical counseling (admonition) take place?**
1. The goal of Biblical counseling is to give instruction from the Bible so the counselee can achieve God's goals in his (her) life. I Ti. 1:5 Colo. 1:27-29
 2. Biblical counseling involves admonishing sin and error. Eph. 6:4 I Sam. 3:13
 3. Biblical counseling involves teaching God's Word and applying it to particular situations.
 4. Biblical counseling is a strengthening ministry. I Th. 5:14 I Co. 10:13
 5. Biblical counseling should be done with gentleness and love. Gal. 6:1-2
 6. Biblical counseling should ideally take place within the local church.

VI. Concluding applications.

Discussion questions

1. Why might Paul have felt he needed to explain why he would write to the Romans?
2. How does Paul exemplify a shepherd's heart in dealing with the Romans?
3. When and why should we commend others?
4. What qualities of maturity were evident in the church in Rome?
5. How can Paul say they are full of goodness and knowledge in light of his earlier teaching on human depravity? 3:10f
6. What is the place of reminder in preaching and teaching?
7. What does it mean that the Bible is sufficient to help people with spiritual problems?
What kinds of problems does the Bible not directly address?
8. In what sense is every Christian a counselor?
9. What are the qualifications to effectively counsel others?
Why are non-Christian psychologists unqualified to help people with soul problems?
10. How would expertise in the book of Romans make someone a better counselor?