

Eternity Daily Bible Study

Romans 9-16 The Implications of Salvation

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE MINISTRY OF THE AIBI

Number: 618

Verses: Romans 15:1-3

Topic: Building Up Our Neighbor

Date: 8th February 2007

Romans 15:1-3 HCSB *Now we who are strong have an obligation to bear the weaknesses of those without strength, and not to please ourselves. (2) Each one of us must please his neighbor for his good, in order to build him up. (3) For even the Messiah did not please Himself. On the contrary, as it is written, **The insults of those who insult You have fallen on Me.***

There is a certain amount of proper inconvenience and self-restraint in being a Christian. The Christian life is not "all about me" or about "self-fulfillment", rather it is about community, grace, edification and loving "one another".

The strong have an obligation toward the weak – to help them, to bless them, to strengthen them and to be considerate toward them. If someone is limping, we slow down, give them a hand and go together with them to their destination. This applies also to spiritual things. It is a team effort and we need to "slow down" and help the weaker brothers in our midst. The person we please is our neighbor – and not ourselves: *Now we who are strong have an obligation to bear the weaknesses of those without strength, and not to please ourselves. (2) Each one of us must please his neighbor for his good, in order to build him up.*

Jesus had every right to please Himself. He could have asked God for a gold chariot and a grand palace and been perfectly worthy of them! Instead of living the high life, He chose the life of incarnate humility – even to the point of accepting scorn and derision: *For even the Messiah did not please Himself. On the contrary, as it is written, **The insults of those who insult You have fallen on Me.***

Jesus accepted suffering, and insults and even died on a cross, so that others (you and I) might find salvation. So also you and I must be prepared to be "put out" a little for others. As a missionary that may involve living at the level of the community rather than the level I am used to "back home". After all that is what Jesus did. For most people it may involve smaller sacrifices such as using non-theological language when conversing with new believers or not having materials around the house that would cause spiritual confusion for a visitor. Or it may be something as simple as not rushing home after church but instead stopping and greeting new people and asking them out for lunch.

The old adage, *God first, others second, self last* - is a good one and fits with much NT teaching and with the example set by the courageous redemptive suffering of Christ and His apostles.

There is much self-centered Christian teaching around today about how we can have "the life we want now". Instead we should be teaching: "How you can help others to have

salvation in Christ"! It is not about our personal comfort, rather it is about the other person's eternal salvation.

As a bible teacher one issue that bothers me is the price of Christian resources. Too often good resources are priced at commercial rates, and yet the costs of production are subsidized through faith giving to the ministry. This means the profit margins are huge. As well as that the ministry is tax exempt and probably pays lower than average wages. Such a ministry is not passing these lower costs on to the consumer, or to the staff, or to the government or to the community in general, rather it goes to enrich the leadership or to enlarge the premises. This may be good business but students at bible colleges, who can seldom afford it, are paying top dollar for materials that can and should be supplied at a much lower price. Such organizations are not acting to "edify their neighbor" but rather simply to increase their wealth. This was never the apostolic mindset.

Every ministry worthy of the name should consider the needs of those they minister to be first and foremost – and profits should be way down the list of priorities. There is way too much "commercialized Christianity" and way too little apostolic and redemptive simplicity.

Peter once said to Jesus 'we have given up all to follow You" (Matthew 19:27). That is the true apostolic spirit! Peter and Paul did not please themselves but followed Christ and built up His Church!

Self-denial is not good in and of itself. Paul knocks that squarely on the head in Colossians 2:18-23. We are not Christian masochists.

Yet self-denial is needed because it is an essential part of building up our neighbor. Building others up takes consideration and care and time and thought and money and sacrifice. Jesus did not go to the cross as a form of self-flagellation, He went to the cross because it was necessary for our salvation and we are to do likewise:

1 John 3:16-18 MKJV *By this we have known the love of God, because He laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. (17) But whoever has this world's goods and sees his brother having need, and shuts up his bowels from him, how does the love of God dwell in him? (18) My children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.*

In fact our works and our reward are grounded in our self-denial for the cause of the Cross:

Matthew 16:24-27 MKJV *Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. (25) For whoever desires to save his life shall lose it, and whoever desires to lose his life for My sake shall find it. (26) For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (27) For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He shall reward each one according to his works.*

Therefore let us not just please ourselves, but instead let us accept the inconvenience and restraints, and take up the cross that comes as we serve others in the Spirit.

Blessings,

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