

Sent: Wednesday, March 21, 2018 6:13 PM  
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Romans 12:3-21

"Let love be without hypocrisy! Abhor what is evil! Cling to what is good!" (Romans 12:9) Such is just part of the "mindset" of the Christian! It's a mindset that captures the basic theme of our MOB study last nite, covering Romans 12:3-9--basically broken down into two parts: (1) "spiritual gifts" given to believers by God's grace, and (2) what love looks like when lived out by the Christian both within the "church" and "outside" to the world at-large!

As we discussed last week, all theology, all teaching about God (the focus of the first 11 chapters of Romans), has implications for how we live! As Douglas Moo notes, theology "includes in its very nature an implicit call to transform one's life, to adjust his thinking and action in accordance with the truth of God in Christ"!

And what's exciting is to realize that every believer is not only called by God's grace alone, but is also given one or more special "spiritual gifts" or "abilities," and "allotted a measure of faith"--just the amount required to fulfill whatever role he (or she) has in the "body of Christ"--or the "church" (made up of believers around the world)!

Moo puts it this way: "Christians are unavoidably tied to each other in one body, the church. We must view ourselves not as isolated individuals but as parts of one organism! And when we view ourselves that way and make the health and welfare of that organism a priority, we are much less likely to think too highly of ourselves!"

Dr. Constable notes that "the man who is humble before God is unlikely to be arrogant before his fellow-creatures"! But I'm getting ahead of our story!

Back to "spiritual gifts"! The apostle Paul, in versus 6-8, identifies seven of them, and they're also discussed in greater detail in I Corinthians 12-14 and in Ephesians 4 (if you really want to get into them!) Here's the way "Shepherd's Notes" briefly describes them from our text:

- 1 – Prophecy – Communication of revealed truth that builds up the believer
- 2 – Service – Practical service to help others
- 3 – Teaching – Ability to provide guidance and moral instruction
- 4 – Giving – Cheerfully contributing to the needs of others
- 5 – Encouraging – Encouraging, comforting, and exhorting others
- 6 – Leadership – Service carried out for the benefit of others
- 7 – Mercy – Helpful activities such as feeding the hungry, caring of the sick and aging

This list is not considered exhaustive but illustrative! (You may want to look further at IBC's "constitution" to see how spiritual gifts, including so-called "sign gifts" are addressed in our church.) It's interesting that at the end of Paul's discussion of gifts in I Corinthians 12 he concludes: "And I'll show you a still more excellent way" (1 Corinthians 12:31) and then expounds, in I Corinthians 13, on the "greatest gift" of all--the gift of love! Which gives the perfect transition for Paul--back in Romans 12:9-21--to write about the "many manifestations of love"! Twenty-four as I count them, in rapid-fire order--but by no means all-inclusive!

Dr. Constable notes that "nowhere else in Paul's writing do we find a more concise collection of ethical instructions"! John MacArthur says this passage "provides a comprehensive and mandatory list of traits that characterize the Spirit-filled life"! Moo sees it as showing the "need for a humble and peaceable attitude toward others--whether fellow Christians or non-Christians! But basically, it's about real love! And we can see the clear parallels to the teaching of Jesus in the "sermon on the mount" (Matthew 5-7 and Luke 6).

The general nature of the commands in our text illustrates the essentially gracious character of the New Covenant's "law of Christ" under which we as Christians now live! Galatians 6:2 says: "Bear one another's burdens and thereby fulfill the "law of Christ." The law of Christ is basically the "law of love," in contrast with the "legal nature" of the Mosaic law!

Jesus said, in John 13:34-35--"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you love one another! By this all men will know that you are My disciple, if you have love for one another!"

And Peter adds in I Peter 4:8--"Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins!"

And so, it really all comes down to love! And our text and related passages show us what real love is all about!

And so, how are we doing? Paul Logan (the other Paul) gave us an "assessment tool" (which each of you should have received) for us to use in examining ourselves--to consider where we are in our walk with the Lord and perhaps some areas we need--no, make that where God needs--to work in our lives!

Maybe you found this lesson, as I have, "intensely personal"! With the seven "spiritual gifts"! And the twenty-four traits of behavior! And those not exhaustive! And then Paul's "assessment tool"! So, I gotta' ask myself: how do I find my place in the "church," the body of Christ? And how am I doing with my behavior? And, basically, with my "brand of love"--in my world?

Well, the good news is that God is not finished with us yet! And neither are we finished with discussing the mindset of the Christian! And so, on April 3rd (since we're not meeting next week with Spring break), we'll get into Romans 13 and, among other things, try to find the right balance between being a citizen of this world and a "citizen of heaven"! Hope to see you then!

Meanwhile--"Let love be without hypocrisy! Abhor what is evil! Cling to what is good!"

Lowell