

ROMANS: CHARTER OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH
"Part XXIII: God's Equipping To Make Us Competent To Counsel"
(Romans 15:14, 15-19)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

A great debate exists in Christian circles today that is usually reflected in the following question we often hear: "Should I just use my Bible and listen to good Christian teaching from the Word, or should I seek professional counseling help for my needs?"

In considering this question, we have the following facts that only serve to show how complicated is its answer:

(1) Sigmund Freud, often considered a major player in the founding of modern psychology, called religion "the obsessional neurosis of humanity," cf. Freud, translated and edited by James Strachey, 1961, The Future of an Illusion, p. 43. **Freud thought little of a belief in God such as is represented in our Christian faith.**

(2) Carl G. Jung, another leading teacher in psychology, claimed that "we psychotherapists must occupy ourselves with problems which, strictly speaking, belong to the theologian." **Again, another leader in psychology feels his field must REPLACE Biblical Christianity as though our faith was DEFICIENT!**

(3) Carl Rogers, another leader in psychology, dabbled in the occult, participated in trying to contact the dead through spiritists, consulted a Ouija Board, etc. according to William Kirk Kilpatrick, The Emperor's New Clothes, p. 177, 129-184. Rogers himself wrote: "Yes, it is true, psychotherapy is subversive . . . Therapies, theories and techniques promote a new model of man contrary to that which has been traditionally accepted." **Rogers as a psychologist stood opposed to the focus on godliness in our Christian faith!**

(4) Yet, **Christians** like Larry Crabb practice professional counseling by seeking to incorporate what they feel they **can** mix into **Biblical** counseling from the views of Freud, Jung and Rogers to form what he calls "**Christian Counseling**". However, trained counselors or theologians like Jay E. Adams and Martin Bobgan **refute** such "**Christian Counseling**" that even **incorporates** the views of anti-Christian thinking of secular counselors like Freud and others.

Well, SHOULD a Christian seek "professional counseling" from secular or EVEN CHRISTIAN practitioners? WHY?!

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . .)

Need: "Should a CHRISTIAN ever seek professional counseling' that incorporates psychology or psychiatry? WHY or why NOT?!"

- I. **Paul was confident his readers could "professionally" counsel one another based on their Christian SPIRITUAL equipping ALONE:**
- A. Paul claimed he was confident his Christian readers were competent to do what professional counselors today practice, Romans 15:14b:
1. The NIV "to instruct" or "to admonish" in the KJV comes from the Greek infinitive, *nouthetein*: it is "training by word" to encourage, reprove or correct as the situation may dictate, UBS Greek N.T., p. 572; Richard C. Trench, Synonyms of the N.T., p. 112.
 2. This is **precisely** what **expert professional counselors** practice:
 - a. According to Jay. E. Adams, while he studied under noted psychiatrist and Research Professor of Psychology, O. Hobart Mowrer in the Eli Lilly Fellowship at the University of Illinois, Mowrer taught getting patients to confess aberrant behaviors as wrong, and assuming personal responsibility for these wrongs was key to their rehabilitation, cf. Jay. E. Adams, Competent to Counsel, p. xiv-xv. Adams knew this was the Bible's view on conviction leading to repentance, so he ceased involvement in counseling to return to teaching Biblical truths, *Ibid.*, p. xviii.
 - b. Psychiatrist Frank Minirth taught our Senior Class at Dallas Theological Seminary that we could counsel others by use of 1 Thessalonians 5:14: this text calls for using various words for various "patients" either to encourage or lead to a repentance.
 - c. Pastor Joe McNally, Faith Bible Church, Winsted reports a professional Christian counselor speaking to AMOC pastors in Olcott, N. Y. said the Gal. 5:22-23 "fruit of the Spirit" counters key psychotic behaviors! Hence, getting one controlled by the Spirit as Scripture for *righteous* living is key to mental health!
- B. This **counseling competency** was based **only** on **spiritual** eligibility:
1. Paul had not **even met** many of his readers according to Romans 15:22-23, so their **competency** about which he spoke in Romans 15:14b was **limited** to the realm of their Christian **faith**, Rom. 1:8.
 2. Paul named the spiritual qualities **supplying** their competency:

- a. Paul's Christian readers were filled with "goodness," a character trait of the wholesome indwelling Holy Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5:22, UBS Greek New Testament, p. 571 with p. 661.
 - b. They were also filled with adequate Bible knowledge to deal with sin and direct one to salvation and holy living, Rom. 15:14.
3. As such, their **competency** did *not* arise from **secular counseling training**: rather, it arose from (a) their having dealt with sin by faith in Christ, (b) by their living by the power of indwelling the Holy Spirit and by (c) life of faith in Scripture to gain practical victory over sin as Paul had taught them in Romans 1:1-15:13!

II. **Paul's viewpoint of his reader's competency to counsel is verified by his reminding them of his own Apostolic authority (as follows):**

- A. Paul was sensitive to the fact that his readers might think he was "talking down" to them by being as direct on matters as he had been. Thus, he admitted he felt his readers were able to admonish one another so they did **not need** such direct words, Rom. 15:14-15a.
- B. Nevertheless, Paul had **authority** as a minister of Jesus Christ to **write** what he **had** written **to them**, and thus he had taken the opportunity to write what he had though it had been direct, 15:15b-16.
- C. Indeed, lest any reader be disturbed that Paul "talked down" to **him** in the letter, Paul reminded his readers of the proofs of his authority as shown by God's certifying miracles in his ministry, Rom. 15:17-19.
- D. **Thus, Paul's APOSTOLIC calling by Jesus Christ ALSO made his statement about his reader's competency to counsel one another AUTHORITATIVE from GOD'S viewpoint!**

Application: *To address counseling needs, (1) believe in Christ as Savior to become a child of God, John 1:12; 3:16. (2) As a believer who is thus indwelt by God the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9b), (a) live dependent upon the Spirit's promptings so that HIS good characteristics described in Gal. 5:22-23 appear in our thinking and living (Gal. 5:16-17). Then, (b) grow in Biblical knowledge to be able to counsel well, Rom. 15:14. (3) If WE STILL need help due to some "blind spot" we have, look to stronger believers for counsel, Rom. 15:14, 1; Prov. 11:14. (4) NOTE: Some cases need medical attention due to physical needs: we should seek a doctor's help with these, and let him suggest a psychiatrist for medical treatment ONLY! [Counsel from secular parties beyond this, unlike Biblical input, is inadequate or counterproductive!]*

Lesson: *Based on APOSTOLIC declaration and testified by the witness of reputable counselors, everyone who has believed in Jesus Christ as Savior from sin, who then lives by the Holy Spirit's power and knows the Biblical truths given in Romans 1:1-15:13 is competent to counsel another party.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

(1) To show the great weakness of professional counseling based on secular psychological theories, Jay Adams stated in his work, The Use Of Scriptures In Counseling, p. 15 the following:

"The unbelieving counselor, seated in his plush, expensive furniture, surrounded by hundreds of books on psychology and psychiatry . . . knows that every statement, that every judgment, that every decision that he makes in counseling is challenged and countered by scores of authors from an equal number of viewpoints . . . The truth of the matter is that the Christian counselor who determines by the grace of God to know and use the Scriptures in his counseling is the only one who can ever have a solid basis for what he says and does."

(2) In Addition, Christian and psychiatrist, Dr. Frank B. Minirth, in his booklet, "You Can Measure Your Mental Health," p. 14 reported on psychological tests that showed the benefit of Scripture use in affecting mental health.

A group of Christians were divided into groups that differed according to how long they had been believers. Tests showed the time they had been Christians did not affect their maturity levels.

However, when they were divided into groups reflecting how much time they spent in reading and studying the Bible, the tests were very informative. Those who spent time *daily* in the Scriptures **"were found to be more mature, more mentally healthy, and to show no significant pathology"** or no significant mental maladjustments.

Dr. Minirth then concluded that Daniel of the Old Testament had the mental stability to have great courage in facing lions, foreign kings and people who were jealous of him because he likewise spent time immersed in God's Word, Ibid. (Daniel 6:1-5)