

ROMANS: RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH FROM START TO FINISH

II. Comforting Edification By Mutual Ministries In The Church

(Romans 1:8-15)

I. Introduction

- A. The theme of the epistle to the Romans is that God's righteousness is available to man by faith from start to finish (Romans 1:16-17; Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 441).
- B. This belief is often not accepted in Christendom: Some claim one must have faith plus works to be justified, and others say that though we are justified by faith, we cannot righteously live the Christian life by faith.
- C. In holding to what Romans teaches, due to the angelic conflict, we often face painful opposition to the truth like what the Early Church faced: in Paul's day, Judaizers pressured believers to be circumcised to be saved (Acts 15:1-21), and Gentile idolaters ardently opposed Paul's stand against idols (Acts 19:23-41). Thus, in Romans 1:8-15, Paul stressed the need for mutual spiritual ministries in the local church to produce nurturing comfort that offset the suffering such ungodly opposition produced. We then do well to heed this teaching:

II. Comforting Edification By Mutual Ministries In The Church, Romans 1:8-15.

- A. The Apostle Paul had not yet visited the Church in Rome (Romans 1:13; 15:22-24), so in opening his epistle to the believers there, he expressed thanksgiving to God through Jesus Christ that their faith was testified "all over the world," a hyperbole that meant "throughout the Roman Empire," Romans 1:8 NIV; *Ibid.*, p. 440.
- B. Paul added that he often prayed for his readers, requesting in prayer that he might have the opportunity by God's will to come to them, Romans 1:9-10.
- C. The purpose behind Paul's desire to visit his readers was that he and they might be comforted and edified through their mutual spiritual ministries to one another, Romans 1:11-15:
 1. Paul had longed to meet with the believers in Rome that he might in his words "impart unto you some spiritual gift" (Romans 1:11 KJV), that is, that he might "exercise his gifts for their benefit," for Paul explained this statement in Romans 1:12 as involving his being "comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me." (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Romans 1:11)
 2. The result of this interaction of Paul's and his readers' spiritual gifts would be the "confirming, strengthening" (*sterizo*, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 775) of all involved, Romans 1:11b. In other words, the goal was mutual spiritual edification through mutual comforting.
 3. Evidence that even the Apostle Paul received nurture from others is possibly found in Romans 16:13 where he sent greetings to Rufus and his mother, adding, "and mine" to indicate that Rufus' mother had been like a mother to Paul himself, meeting his material, housing, or food needs like a mother would dote over her son! She may have had the gift of "helps" (1 Corinthians 12:28) and used it to minister to Paul!
 4. Then, focusing on his personal contribution to the believers in Rome in Romans 1:13-15, Paul wrote of his desire to visit Rome that he might have some converts there as he had in other nations. (v. 13) He considered himself to be a debtor both to the Greeks and to the "barbarians," a term referring to all other human beings who were not Greeks, Romans 1:14a; *Ibid.*, Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 441. Parallel to the word "barbarians" is the word *anoetois* in the next couplet that means "uncultured" (*Ibid.*), so Paul sensed a debt to all people groups worldwide regardless of race, gender, or ethnicity, and Paul was also eager to preach the Gospel to those who were in Rome, Romans 1:14-15 NIV.

Lesson: *In an era when the Early Church faced an often-hostile world of opposition from Judaizers as well as idolatrous Gentiles, Paul sought to meet with fellow believers in Rome so he could use his apostolic gift to evangelize in their city, to teach and direct believers there as well as to give and to receive nurturing, comforting edification in the ministry of the spiritual gifts of believers in the local church.*

Application: *(1) Since we face a world of darkness and hostility to the Biblical faith in human relationships and in the angelic conflict, what inflicts pain and drains the inner man, we believers need to meet together in the local church for our mutual comfort and edification in the Lord through the ministries of our varied spiritual gifts to one another. (2) Note: At times, such suffering can come NOT ONLY from OUTSIDE of the church, but from "tares" or unbelievers who present themselves as believers IN the church, Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43. The solution to this problem is (a) to withdraw from unedifying parties as far as necessary to avoid being harmed (2 Timothy 3:1-9), (b) to fellowship with the upright (2 Timothy 2:22) and ESPECIALLY (b) for Bible teachers to give every effort to expound priceless Scripture truths to comfort and edify believers (Matthew 13:43, 51-52; Daniel 12:3-4).*