



Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter

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Understanding the New Testament The Book of Romans

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, "The one who is righteous will live by faith." Romans 1:16-17

An Introduction to the Epistles

Imagine yourself living in the first decades after the resurrection of Christ. You and your family have converted to Christianity and been baptized. But, what does it mean to be a Christian? Unlike you the Christians of the first century did not have 2000 years of tradition to help them understand their faith. God had made them the Body of Christ but what that meant for their lives was a mystery. How does one live, day to day, as a Christian? What impact should our faith have on our lives? How do Christian beliefs intersect with marriage, morality, mortality, business practices, government and family life? What should we do when faced with persecution by the government? All these questions and more are discussed in the epistles.

If you were a part of a Church started by Paul you would gather with the others in the church and worship in the ways Paul taught. You would study the lessons that Paul had taught and you would seek to understand God's claim on your life. You would also meet with other traveling evangelists like Apollos or Chephas. And, you would form opinions and beliefs. The problems would arise when your opinions and beliefs contradicted those of other Christians. That would lead to disagreements, fights and "sidetaking" by other members of the Church. In an effort to resolve those disputes you might write a letter to the evangelist who planted your church. You might write to Paul and ask him to referee the disputes in the Church. Part of what we have in the epistles are the responses of Paul to those questions from his churches.

Some critics have suggested that Paul's explanations go far beyond what Jesus taught. In some respects that is a fair criticism. But in essence, Paul has not modified what Jesus taught or the core teachings that developed over 3000 years in the Jewish community. After all, Jesus' teachings are firmly rooted in "the Law and the Prophets." Paul applies his understanding of the teachings of Christ to the realities of living in Christian community. Such work was necessary for the Church to survive.

Almost one quarter of the New Testament is made up of letters that bear the name of Paul. Those that were almost certainly not actually written by Paul nevertheless reflect much of Paul's theology as contained in the authentic letters. These other letters were most likely written by disciples of Paul's teachings. As you read the epistles keep in mind that you are witnessing the struggle of the church to understand what it means to live out a life of discipleship; what it means to follow Christ.

Paul's Letter to the Romans

Notwithstanding everything written above, Romans is a different kind of letter. The Letter to the Romans was written toward the end of Paul's ministry, probably around 58 CE. Unlike Paul's other letters, Paul is writing to a Church he did not establish and probably never before visited. Based upon things stated in the letter he seems to be planning a trip to Jerusalem and then a trip through Rome on his way to Spain. It is likely that the up-coming trip to Jerusalem he describes is the one that ended with his imprisonment in Caesarea. He would indeed go to Rome, but as a prisoner. He is believed to have died in Rome, murdered by Nero.

Roman's position in the New Testament is based upon its length. It is the longest of the Epistles which are ordered roughly according to length. Still, Romans is probably one of the most influential of Paul's letters in terms of the development of Christian theology. When Martin Luther was struggling with the problems he perceived in the Roman Catholic Church he turned first to Romans. The theme of Romans is the reality of salvation through faith in the sacrifice of Christ. That theme is stated early in the letter:

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, "The one who is righteous will live by faith." Romans 1:16-17.

Simply stated, the gospel declares salvation for all who have faith, both Jew and Greek. We are saved through faith in God, not through our deeds. This insight freed Martin Luther from his frustration over seeking to live a sinless life. He knew that, no matter how hard he worked at it, he would continue to sin. If his salvation was left to his own good works, he was lost. As Paul notes in Romans, all have sinned. Romans 3:23. Moreover:

¹⁵ I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ¹⁶ Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷ But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. ¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. Romans 7:15-20

I don't do what I should do and I do what I shouldn't do. We know the difference yet we still act wrongly. Paul is speaking of himself decades after his Damascus Road experience. Paul also makes it clear that the gospel did not replace the law and that the Christians did not replace the Jews. The Salvation offered by God is for the Jews and the Gentiles.

Why is Paul writing to the church in Rome in such detail laying out his understanding of the gospel? We don't know but there is a basis in the letter for informed speculation. We know from his letter to the Galatians that there were elements in the Church, possibly from some Christians in Jerusalem, who were seeking to undermine his ministry. Paul may either know, or suspect, that these people have carried their accusations to the church at Rome. This letter seems to be a sort of introduction explaining to the church exactly what he has been preaching and why. Paul was probably counting on the support of the Church in

Rome for his planned missionary journey to Spain. As we will see, much of what Paul tells the Romans about his understanding of the gospel was derived from his work with the churches he established.

Next Week: 1&2 Corinthians

The Poverty and Justice Bible

The Poverty & Justice Bible is a bible that highlights each passage of scripture that deals with the issues of poverty and justice. There are more than 2000 references in scripture to poverty and justice, as opposed to four or five on such controversial subjects as homosexual acts or marriage. Yet many Christians seem to think that helping the poor is a pointless and even harmful act. As an on-going part of this newsletter, I will be providing citations to passages from the Old and New Testaments each week that deal with what scripture tells us about poverty and justice. If you are interested in learning more about *The Poverty & Justice Bible* you can check on Amazon.com or go to www.Justicebible.org.

¹ *and he sent Nathan the prophet to tell this story to David:*

A rich man and a poor man lived in the same town. ² The rich man owned a lot of sheep and cattle, ³ but the poor man had only one little lamb that he had bought and raised. The lamb became a pet for him and his children. He even let it eat from his plate and drink from his cup and sleep on his lap. The lamb was like one of his own children.

⁴ *One day someone came to visit the rich man, but the rich man didn't want to kill any of his own sheep or cattle and serve it to the visitor. So he stole the poor man's little lamb and served it instead.*

⁵ *David was furious with the rich man and said to Nathan, "I swear by the living LORD that the man who did this deserves to die!" ⁶ And because he didn't have any pity on the poor man, he will have to pay four times what the lamb was worth."*

⁷ *Then Nathan told David:*

You are that rich man! 2 Sam 12:1-7 CEV

Much is said of the "sense of entitlement" mentality of the poor. Yet the story of David and Bathsheba suggests that it is the sense of entitlement of the rich that threatens society. Wealth and power can corrupt our thinking; can bring us to believe that our lives are more important than the lives of "lesser" persons. David's arrogance led him to take another man's wife and murder her husband. It wasn't until Nathan forced David to confront his own sin that he realized how low he had sunk.

²⁰ *When you meet together, you don't really celebrate the Lord's Supper. ²¹ You even start eating before everyone gets to the meeting, and some of you go hungry, while others get drunk. ²² Don't you have homes where you can eat and drink? Do you hate God's church? Do you want to embarrass people who don't have anything? What can I say to you? I certainly cannot praise you. 1 Cor 11:20-21*

In 1st Corinthians, one of the problems confronting the Church was the sense of entitlement felt by the rich. The Lord's Supper was celebrated by the early Church as a community meal. Yet the rich, who could arrive to the feast early, ate all the food and drank all the wine leaving nothing for the poorer members of the Church who could not arrive until their day's work was completed. Paul condemns this practice since it excludes some members of the church and generally demonstrates disdain for the poor by the rich. He chides the rich for taking the Lord's Supper in an "unworthy manner" by effectively excluding the other members of the church.

Bible Study

For the last two years I have led a bible study on Thursday mornings from 10:00 to noon. This group is just finishing up Disciple I. We will begin a new study on October 10th. There is room for as many as would like to participate. Please call me if you have questions or simply come and be a part of our study beginning October 10th.

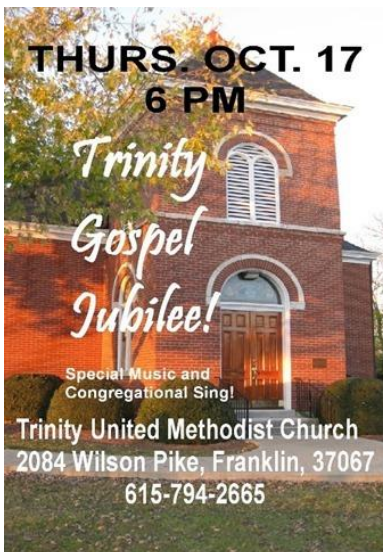
I believe that study of scriptures with other Christians is an essential part of our journey as Disciples. If you would like to be a part of a bible study at another time, during the day or evening, please contact me. If we can interest four or five people in gathering at a particular time I would be glad to lead another study.

Trinity Gospel Jubilee

Hello everyone...We are excited about our up-coming gospel sing on Oct. 17th. We would like to put together a little "ad hoc" gospel choir for the occasion to sing 2 or 3 things and help lead the congregational singing. We would rehearse once or twice...maybe on a Tuesday...the 8th and/or 15th. This time will be very informal and fun. No music reading necessary...only a song in your heart! If you can help, please let us know ASAP! Of course, if you know of anyone else who would like to sing, please pass this invitation along to them.

Thanks and make a joyful noise!

Hal & Rachel



Graceworks' Ministries

As I have mentioned a number of times from the pulpit, around 250,000 children go to bed hungry in Tennessee some part of every week. That figure has grown over the years. Their families are what are called "food insecure." There is rarely enough nourishing food in the home to be certain of providing for the needs of the children. Some of those children live right here in Williamson County.

Graceworks ministry has a program to provide food for children in need to take home over the weekends. These "Fuel Bags" provide nutritious food that the child can eat without preparation or with minimal preparation. The Children's Sunday school class is organizing Trinity UMC's support of this program. We can coordinate donations of money to Graceworks. Simply

designate that Graceworks should receive the funds on a check to the church. If you would rather donate the goods themselves, we need the following contributions:

Boxed Milk
Raisins/Fruit Snacks
Peanut
Butter Crackers
Cheese Crackers
Cereal Cups

Pudding Cups
Microwaveable Meat Meals
Easy Mac
Tuna & Crackers

Thanks for your support of this ministry. If you would rather not shop for these goods yourself, you could make a check payable to the church and earmarked for the Fuel Bag program. That money will be used to purchase food to be given to Graceworks.

Graceworks has on-going needs in their ministries to the community. In particular, at the present time, the following items are in short supply:

Toilet Paper	Shampoo/Conditioner
Razors	Shaving Cream
Dishwashing Liquid	Cleaning Supplies
Laundry Detergent	Soap
Toothpaste	Toothbrushes

If you are able to contribute any of these items, please bring them by the Church and we will deliver them. Thank you for your support of this ministry.

Still Looking for Worship Leaders

The Worship Ministry is central to any church because it involves the majority of the members every week. Central to the Worship Ministry is the leadership of the laity. Judy Richardson and I are trying to organize the worship leadership schedule so that it is easier for people to plan in advance when they will be serving as **Greeters, Liturgists, Ushers and Counters**.

I would very much like to see greater participation in worship leadership from the laity. If you would like to make worship leadership part of your ministry in the church, please contact either Judy Richardson or Rev. Meaker.

Prayer Ministry

The following persons have agreed to be part of the prayer ministry at Trinity UMC:

Elva Beard	Sarah Jordan	Kenneth Stevens	Judy Richardson
Larry Eastwood	Mac McAfee	Patricia Stevens	Charles Wilson
Leslie Eastwood	Rachel Newman	Sam Richardson	

The members of the prayer ministry of Trinity United Methodist church covenant with one another to pray daily for:

- Those concerns on the prayer list of the Church and for healing of body and spirit for all persons listed;

- For each ministry of the church that each ministry would work to bring the Gospel to those within our community and most especially to bring the Gospel to those who have not yet accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior;
- For all the members of the Trinity UMC community that they be led and enabled to live as the Body of Christ;
- For our local community and all its needs, especially for those who are struggling with the burden of poverty;
- For our nation and our world that God help lead the people of the world to live in peace with God's Kingdom.

If you would like to be a part of this ministry (or if you have already spoken to me about it and were inadvertently left off the list) please let me know and I will see that you are added.

Up-Coming Sermons

October 6th Sermon: How Much Faith is Enough? Just how much faith is enough and how in the world is it measured? My texts are 2 Timothy 1:1–14 and Luke 17:5–10.

October 13th Sermon: Worship is a Verb! Too often we think of worship as an event that we attend. However, worship is actually something that we **do**. My texts are 1 Timothy 2:8-15 and Luke 17:11-19.

Worship Leaders Schedule

October 6

Rachel Newman, **Liturgist**

Sam Richardson & Marty Bauguess, **Greeters**

Mike & Elaine Rohrig, **Ushers**

October 13

Elaine Rohrig, **Liturgist**

Tommy & Jo Cotton, **Greeters**

Jeanne Rybolt & Linda Robinson, **Ushers**

Announcements

You are invited to "**Old School Sunday School**" at **9:45** in the Fellowship Hall. We are singing, praying, studying scripture and caring for one another as we strive to become new people in Christ. Our curriculum is Cokesbury's Adult Bible Studies and our template is Colossians 3:12-17.

We will have a **Sunday School Assembly this Sunday, October 6 at 9:45** for group singing before Sunday School begins at 10:00. Rachel and Hal will lead. Please join us as we share this precious time of worship and singing.

“Companions in Christ” gathers at 9:45. We are talking about how to be better companions to our fellow Christians, discover what our spiritual gifts are, and dig deeper into what we believe and why. Please come and

enjoy this time with your church family and deepen your spiritual connection with God. We will meet in the Youth Sunday School room. All are welcome!

We are updating the church directory with names, current addresses, telephone numbers (home and mobile) and email addresses. **Please speak to Judy Richardson or call her at 615-595-4833. Also, her email address is Richardson824@msn.com.** We want to include all members in our directory so please use either of the options above as soon as possible.

Ministry with 61st Ave. UMC. The remaining date to serve and worship this year is **November 16.**

Mark your calendars for Sunday, October 13. This is **Worship Leadership Sunday.** Following the service, **Worship Leadership Volunteer Training** will take place from 12:00 – 1:00. **All persons who participate as Worship Leaders, Ushers, Greeters, Liturgists, Acolytes,** etc. are encouraged to attend this training. Further details will be provided closer to this event.

ATTENTION Finance Committee Members:

The following are future Finance Committee meeting dates:

October 19, 2013 – Review 3rd Quarter Financial Results

January 18, 2014 – Review 4th Quarter & 2013 Financial Results

Choir Rehearsal: Rehearsal is scheduled for October 2 at **7:00 PM.**

Men's Group: The **pancake breakfast** is planned for Saturday, **October 12 from 8:00 – 10:00 AM.** Please plan to attend as the men share their talents for the sake of the church and the community.

October Birthdays

Elaine Rohrig, Julia Moore

Happy Birthday to each of you!