

Henley-in-Arden Baptist Church

“Staying Connected” 18 – Sunday 19th July 2020

Staying connected to God and each other while not meeting as church in the normal way

Greetings as these strange circumstances continue!

We continue this week with our look at the closing chapters of Paul’s letter to the Romans.

If Romans 12 was about Christian living in the church; this week (Romans 13) is about Christian living in the world.

And the first instruction is to obey the governmental authorities (Rom 13:1-7). This is an important doctrine. The God of order wants us to live well with each other and work for the common good. We must respect our leaders, the laws of the land, and pay our taxes and so forth...

But..

Only as far as it goes. We need to keep the whole of scripture in mind. There are limits to allegiance to human authority, and sometimes challenge is necessary. If there’s a conflict, then we’re to obey God first (see for example what happened in Acts 5, where the apostles said “we must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29)).

Today in the UK of course we live under a regime where it is absolutely right and proper that we take these words in Romans 13 seriously for ourselves. (contrast the extreme conditions in Nazi Germany in the 1930s for example, where some churches saw it as their duty to defy the state – as far as they could. An extreme example, thankfully not applying in our case today).

But critique and sometimes righteous protest is appropriate too – consider Martin Luther King, a Baptist minister in America of more than a generation ago, who dreamt and campaigned for justice. There’s always room for the prophetic voice in any age.

Where might the prophets be found in our generation, I wonder....? (food for thought, perhaps).

Meanwhile, let’s respect and encourage our government and opposition parties in their hard work on our behalf, and let’s play our part as good citizens, thanking God and praying for them.



The second half of the chapter explains that the way of love is always the right way, and this should inform our behaviour. “Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another...” (Rom 13:8). “.... Love is the fulfilment of the law.” (Rom 13:10).

We aspire to live as Jesus did... “Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 13:14).

Lord God, our heavenly Father,

Thank you for our MPs, and in particular our government and their commitment to leading us wisely through these unprecedented circumstances. Help them, we pray; and help us to be faithful in prayer and support as appropriate. We pray too for the opposition parties and their role in keeping the government to account.

Thank you for the example of our Lord, Jesus: sometimes complying, sometimes challenging; but always loving. Strengthen us in Your love and faithfulness to You, we pray. Fill us anew with Your Spirit: that goodness and kindness may abound...

We pray this week for scientists, secretaries, sales executives... teachers, train drivers, travel agents... bless them, Lord, in their lives and work we pray.

As the global pandemic continues, we pray against this virus; and for treatments and vaccines to be found – in You, O Lord, we put our hope and trust...

Finally, we thank You most of all for Your love and care for us day by day. Be especially close to those who need Your extra help and strength at this time, we pray.

We bring our grateful prayers, in the name of our Saviour and friend, the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

Answer to last week's quiz:

Paul was planning to go to *Spain* [Romans 15:24]

And a fun cartoon: a challenge perhaps to those of us who think 'progress' of society is inevitable...!



For those not online, especially:

Worship services on radio and TV this Sunday include:

- Radio 4 8:10am Sunday Worship
- BBC1 1:15pm Songs of Praise

And finally, please do get in touch with me at any time

May God bless you with His peace.

Mike

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