

Study Notes – Holy Spirit

This month's study passage is from Paul's letter to the church in Rome. It was written from Corinth, probably about 55-57AD. Paul had never visited that church but longed to. As with many of the New Testament churches, there was conflict between the Jewish and Gentile Christians in the Roman church. All Jews had been expelled from Rome under Caesar Claudius, but in AD54 Nero succeeded him and they were allowed to return. This led to disagreements about who should be in charge and what rules should be followed.

Paul explains in the letter that all people are sinners, falling short of God's righteousness, and the only solution is a totally new life by the death and resurrection of Jesus. Paul is very clear in many of his letters that there can be no mixture or compromise. The old life under Jewish legalism, Greco-Roman paganism or natural human effort can never please God. Only a new life in Christ, empowered and indwelt by the Holy Spirit through faith can suffice. Only the Holy Spirit can make us like Christ, overflowing with Christlike gifts and fruit.

The Holy Spirit is God - the third person of the Trinity, not merely a force or energy. He is mentioned in the Bible from Gen 1v2 to Rev 22v17. You can see many of His attributes in verses such as Isaiah 11v2 and 2Tim 1v7. In John 14 and 16, Jesus spoke of Him as the Spirit of Truth and the Helper or Comforter (Greek: parakletos = one called alongside, encourager, advocate, friend). If you are unfamiliar with the Holy Spirit and His work in our lives, I can recommend the book by Robert Morris: *The God I Never Knew*.

Our passage starts with the word "therefore", so we need to look at the first 11 verses of Romans 8 to see the context. There is a lot about death and life. The Greek word used for "death" is "thanatos" which indicates "separation" - either between soul and body or between man and God. It is a different word "nekros" which indicates a physically dead body. The Greek word used here for "life" is "zoe" which indicates eternal happiness, not just existence which is the word "bios".

The Book of Romans has life changing truth but it must be approached with effort and determination to understand what the Holy Spirit said through the Apostle Paul. Martin Luther praised Romans, and said: "It is the chief part of the New Testament and the perfect gospel... the absolute epitome of the gospel." It is truly a book that you should read slowly and intently for long periods to begin to understand all that God in Christ has done for you and me. If you want the truth of the gospel to impact your lifestyle and attitudes then this is a great place to start.