***Advise One Another
RO185-01***

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Please open your Bibles today to a new section now in Romans 15:14-16. Our subject is "The Authority for Boldness," and this is segment number one.

**The Book of Romans**

Romans 15:13 concludes the main instructional portion of Paul's letter to the Christians in the city of Rome. He has written this book, you may remember, from the city of Corinth to believers in Rome – Christians whom he himself has never met. Paul writes in order, actually, to lay the groundwork for an intended visit to Rome on one of his missionary travels. Paul's letter to the Roman Christians is the most complete explanation of grace salvation that we have in the New Testament. It is the kind of a letter that a doctorate candidate would write in the form of a dissertation. It is very orderly. It is very organized. It is very specific. And it progresses from the human problem to the divine solution in a very orderly way, and in-depth. This is not a simple little book, as you have learned over several years that we have been studying it. But it is a book that gives enormous orientation upon life, and especially upon how a human being can be rightly related to the living God. This is one of the all-time great books of the New Testament.

Paul teaches in this book what Jesus Christ actually taught him about how a sinner can go to heaven. Therefore, this is the final word. Any viewpoint among people that differs from Romans concerning the issue of salvation is wrong. This book has the true scoop on that subject, and this book alone has the true perspective. The apostle Paul teaches in this book the total difference between Israel and the church, a principle which most Christian groups today ignore completely to their great devastation, and to the great destruction. I have found that when people do not distinguish that God has a program for the Jews that is totally separate from His program for the Christian, that they also begin to lose a great deal of perspective and understanding of the Word of God, and they become very shallow Christians. I'm not sure what the connection is, but people who do not understand that the church is a unique grace institution of God do not become in-depth mature Christians.

I have recently spent numerous conversations, almost feeling like I was a foreign missionary, with questions about the Bible directed to me by people who have spent their lives in church, and who are up in years, and who are mature people. And I found it extremely difficult to talk to them because I didn't have any place to work from as a frame of reference for their understanding. These were people who were in dramatic religious institutions who have dramatic reputations, but the people themselves are in a system that does not distinguish between Israel and the church, and they are therefore ignorant of all fundamental doctrines.

The apostle Paul wrote this book in part to try to prevent that from happening – such that people would understand that God has a future for the Jews, even though he is now under discipline, and that the church is a gracious, marvelous, separate entity in the program and plan of God, so that Christians are the elite believers of all the ages.

The apostle Paul, furthermore, teaches justification before a holy God by trusting in Jesus Christ as the sacrifice of God to cover the sins of all mankind. Paul explains in this book the dynamic power for daily living which God has provided for the church-age believer. So, you do not have to go through life as a spiritual wimp. But you can actually go through life as a conqueror; as a strong man; and, as a person who is able to meet the forces of Satan at every level, and from every approach, and you'll you come out on top every time. This dynamic power system consists of Bible doctrine and of the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. The humanity of Jesus Christ operated on this same combination, and He never sinned once. The apostle Paul tries to explain that after you are saved, you have this power system available to you if you are willing to take the time to develop a knowledge of doctrine, and understand how to keep yourself in temporal fellowship, so that God the Holy Spirit can function and defeat your sin nature.

Paul also clarifies in this book God's future plans to fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant promises to the Jewish people, even though they are now under severe discipline. Paul reveals in this book also that it is the Christian's duty to live his life in service for God, and to eventually secure eternal rewards for that dedication. This is not very easy to do. And every honest Christian must admit to himself that he constantly has to fight (and it's an uphill battle) that his life be devoted to God's service. It is so easy to get caught up excitedly in so many other things that we do, and so many other things that hold our attention, that every now and then we just have to sit down in a chair; look at ourselves; and, say, "What in the world am I doing? Where am I going? What am I investing myself, my time, and my money in? And where am I going to be in reference to all this 100 years down the line? And how will I look back 100 years later at myself, and what I'm doing now?" It is very important, as Paul has stressed, to get your focus on eternity, and your awareness of where your true riches and your true future lays.

Beginning at Romans 15:14, Paul begins a new section of the book which actually is a closing summary of this letter. In this portion, he becomes very personal rather than a doctrinal teacher. This final section includes, therefore, words of commendation to the saints in Rome; words of encouragement; words of further clarification; and, words of personal greeting to friends, and then closes with a great doxology of praise to God.

So, we begin today at Romans 15:14, where we have an expression of confidence on the part of the apostle Paul. He refers to the spiritual condition that exists in Rome among these Christians. Earlier in this letter, Paul has given some very severe warnings; some rebukes; and, some correction to the Roman Christians. He has a lot of information about them from various sources, though he himself has never visited the city of Rome, and has never ministered to these people. He has told them, however, pointedly, that immoral, indifferent, unbelieving pagans are going to be sent by God into the lake of fire forever. He has told them that those among them who are cultured, educated, moral unbelievers are also headed for the lake of fire. And he has even told them that those who are religious Jews, and who recognize the true God, but who do not trust in Jesus Christ as personal Savior, are also doomed to the lake of fire.

Now, this has condemned most of the human race in those three categories that has wiped out most of the citizens of Rome from ever entering the realm of heaven. They are doomed to hell forever. This has indeed been strong language. Furthermore, he has rebuked the arrogant and abusive attitude that some strong Christians have been displaying toward weaker brethren. And he has tried to straighten that out, because he is aware of the fact that the people of Rome, though they have never had the ministry of an apostle, are a very well-informed congregation doctrinally. All over this city of Rome, there were house churches with small congregations meeting, each of them with one elder who was the pastor-teacher, and they were well-taught from information that had come to this city from outside.

Naturally, Rome was the center of the ancient world. It was the center of all commerce. It was the center of everything. And the roads from all over the world led to Rome. And people with information were constantly coming to Rome. So, these people in Rome, though they did not have an apostle ministering to them, were well-informed concerning biblical principles. So, Paul has spoken to them in a very frank way.

He begins this section of his letter with a desire to clarify that his frank teaching does not imply a low esteem for the Christians in Rome. He realizes that they are well-informed. As a matter of fact, he began this book by commending them for the good reputation which they bore in the ancient world among other believers. In Romans 1:8, he has said, "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world." Now that is a very great commendation – that a church (a local group of people) can be so significant in their spiritual life and their spiritual impact in the ministry that they're performing, that people in other places are aware of what they're doing, and they're talking about it with enthusiasm: "Have you heard what's going on in Rome? Do you know what the believers there are doing? Do you know what kind of people they are? What a terrific royal group of human beings these Roman Christians are." They were a superior group, and Paul says, "I know that."

As a matter of fact, Paul, at the beginning of this letter, indicated that he was looking forward eagerly to a personal association with them. In Romans 1:12, he says, "That is, that I may be encouraged together with you, while among you, each of us by the others faith, both yours and mine." Paul said, "I'm looking forward to being with you so that I may learn from you, and you may learn from me."

Some Christians in Rome, of course, might wonder why Paul, who had never met them, should be writing to them with such commanding authority. As you are well-aware, in this letter, Paul has not minced words, and he has not apologized for the truth that he has laid out before them, and the implications, periodically, that they needed to do some straightening up of their lives as believers. Paul is aware that there are spiritual weaknesses in some of these Roman Christians, but he is stressing that this in no way lessens his high esteem for the believers there as a whole.

**Brethren**

He indicates that he has a very close and friendly attachment to them, because he begins by saying, "And concerning you, my brethren." The Greek word is "adelphos" there, which simply indicates a family relationship. Paul calls them his brothers in Christ. He views them as family members in Christ Jesus. And this is the cordial address of a friend.

**A Conviction**

He says that: "He himself also has a conviction about them." Other people have certain convictions about them, as he has indicated, and he has one. The word "conviction" is the Greek word "peitho." This word means "to be persuaded about something." In the Greek language, this word is in the perfect tense, which tells us that this conviction that Paul has, he has gained in the past from a lot of information that kept coming to him about these Christians. And this information has accumulated a viewpoint which he now holds at this point in time as he is writing this letter.

Furthermore, it is in the passive voice, which indicates that the apostle Paul is reacting to the information that has come to him. He is not flattering these people. He is not saying something nice about them so that he can get something back out of them. He is telling them something that is not a self-imposed belief, but what actually has evolved out of the reports that have come to him about them. It's in the indicative mood – a statement of fact.

Paul says, "I myself also." "I myself also" in the Greek sentence is very emphatic. He shares the convictions that others have about the good spiritual quality of the Roman Christians. And what he observes about them is that they are full of something. The Greek word is "mestos," which means that they are amply supplied with something. What are they amply supplied with? Two things.

**Goodness**

He says, "I myself, along with the conviction of other people, am also persuaded that you yourselves are full of goodness. The Greek word is "agathosune." "Agathosune" means "to be characterized by doing what is spiritually beneficial." That's what "goodness" means. A good Christian is a person who does what is spiritually beneficial. It connotes a person who has a kind and conciliatory attitude toward others. This is an emotional quality we're talking about. A lot of people look like they're good people because they do deeds of mercy, but they're horrid on the inside, and they have terrible attitudes, and they're mean-spirited. The apostle Paul says, "I'm glad to report that I have the conviction, from what I hear of you people in Rome, that you believers have a spirit of goodness; you have a quality of consideration; and, you have a quality of conciliation toward others." This is the quality, indeed, of a mature Christian.

Being full of goodness, of course, means that these Christians were not under the control of the sin nature, but they were under the control of the Holy Spirit. And that's what made them good. They are filled with the Spirit. Goodness is indeed, as Paul has earlier in his letter indicated, not a natural quality. People by nature are not good. Romans 3:12 says, "They have turned aside together. They have become useless. There's no one who does good. There is not even one."

Now, this flies in the face of everything which is being taught today by New Age doctrine – the old Hinduism dressed up in new, modern terminology, that begins with the basic principle that people are good. People are so good, in fact, that they are actually potential gods. And they're simply evolving out of their goodness into complete deity. The Bible says that that is a bunch of hogwash. That is not true. People are not by nature good. They are by nature sinful. They are by nature evil. And their natures must be transformed by regeneration and the filling of the Holy Spirit.

Paul says, "You people have been regenerated. You're operating in temporal fellowship. And you have produced, therefore, through the Spirit of God, goodness, because goodness is part of the fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5:22 makes that very clear. The old sin nature does produce human good deeds. But these human good deeds Isaiah calls "filthy rags in the sight of God." Goodness is the product of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22).

So, a Christian characterized by goodness (Paul connects it back to his contacts here, just before) is indeed a Christian who is not going to be pushing around weaker believers. He has just been talking in the previous section about how strong Christians should treat weak Christians. A Christian who has a quality of goodness responds with tenderness toward the inanities of the weak Christian.

**Knowledge**

Furthermore, Paul says, "I'm happy to report that you are filled with something." The word "filled" is the Greek word "pleroo." This word means to be loaded up with something. And what are they loaded up with? Knowledge. This is the Greek word "gnosis." Now this is the word for "knowledge" that talks about information. The mind has two functions. There is the perceptive mind into which information comes. That's what "gnosis" is. Out of the decision-making portion of the brain comes the actions that a person follows in his life. This is not just knowledge, but this is the Greek word "epignosis." And "epignosis" is full knowledge. This is knowledge which a person has believed. You can have a lot of information in your perceptive mind that you just know. Many Christians do. They don't really believe it. They don't really act upon it. They don't commit themselves to it. Therefore, it just sits there. And it never goes down into the human spirit to be cycled back up here into the decision-making part of their mind, so that they have it to guide them in their lives.

So, Paul is saying to these people: "You have a lot of doctrinal information. You have been taught, and you are simply filled with this knowledge." "All knowledge" means that they have a good grasp on basic doctrines. The Christians in Rome, in spite of not having the ministry of an apostle, had learned a lot of doctrine from evangelists and pastor-teachers in their midst. Strong Christians are always characterized by the fact that they are filled with a knowledge of doctrine. We have this indicated to us in 1 Corinthians 8:1: "Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge." We have information about what an idol is. We know that behind an idol there is a demon spirit. But this is spiritual information, and we know that we got it from God the Holy Spirit. We know we didn't just find it in ourselves.

So, the end of the verse says, "Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies." Yes, you have a knowledge of doctrine, but that knowledge of doctrine must be (under the filling of the Holy Spirit) believed, so that it is down in the human spirit. Love makes that knowledge useful. Love causes that knowledge to make you a humble person; whereas, there are a lot of Christians who say, "Boy, I know a great deal about the Bible," and it causes them to be arrogant people.

The apostle Paul says, "A Christian who is mature will have knowledge without arrogance." 1 Corinthians 8:7 says: "However, not all men have this knowledge, but some, being accustomed to the idol until now, eat food as if it were sacrificed to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. Paul says, "There are some weak Christians among us. They don't even have the information. They have never been taught. No one has ever explained to them that eating a piece of meat that once was offered to an idol is no problem. There's nothing wrong with the meat, and it does not connote anything. But to them who do not have this information, you have to make adjustments."

1 Corinthians 8:10-11: "For if someone sees you, the one who have knowledge (you have the doctrinal understanding on this issue), dining in an idol's temple, will his conscience, if he is weak, not be strengthened to eat things sacrificed idols for it? For through your knowledge, he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died." So, it is very important to have knowledge of doctrine. Paul says, "Those who have this knowledge, and have it with a proper spirit of subjection to the Spirit of God within them, will not become proud people. And they will not use this knowledge to abuse weaker Christians, but rather to help them."

The goodness here, that these Christians have, is an emotional factor. The knowledge is an intellectual factor. Both these are qualifications for being a mature believer. In the Christian faith, we are not called upon to make leaps of faith into the dark. God has given us great information. We base our faith on the intellectual knowledge we have of doctrine. We do not base our faith upon ignorance of doctrine and emotional expressions and feelings. When you operate with God on the basis of a lack of knowledge of doctrine, and how you feel about things, you end up in the charismatic condition of the charismatic people today. You are a sitting duck then for Satan.

This word "pleroo" is again in the perfect tense in the Greek language. This means that, from repeated past periods of instruction, these people now have a competent, divine viewpoint grasp of doctrine. It is passive because they receive this spiritual understanding as a gift from the Spirit of God through doctrine. They operate under the great system of perception, and now they have received information. This is not their mere human IQ. This is not something that is automatically residing in them. It was not already in the human mind as a universal consciousness to be recalled.

**Universal Consciousness of the New Age Movement**

If you are not aware of the fact, you should be aware of the fact that Christians are increasingly coming under attack now by the New Age doctrine of universal consciousness. Christians are headed, in our society, in these final years, toward a holocaust such as was experienced by the Jewish people. The time may come when, in the millennium, you will have a memorial to the Holocaust that Christians experienced by a society that rose up in anger over the rejection by the believer that the information is in himself that he needs about being related to God, and that the information has to come from the knowledge of the Word of God.

**Man is Evil**

You may have stood in Jerusalem at the memorial to the Holocaust of those six million Jews, the Yad Vashem. And almost as the breezes blow, you can hear the agonies and the cries and the voices of those who went through that horrible experience. And then when you walk into that museum, and you see it firsthand – all the paraphernalia that were involved by the Nazi government in the systematic destruction of the Jewish people, you realize that man is evil. You realize that there is no information about God within man himself. You realize that there is no universal consciousness to bring up goodness for man. You realize that when man is turned loose on his own, he is a vile creature. When the antichrist takes over, he will be the vilest of all creatures that has ever lived. And all believers in Jesus Christ will become candidates for another Holocaust memorial.

1 Corinthians 2:14 indicates this about our capacity to understand spiritual things: "But a natural man (that is, an unsaved person) does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him. Furthermore, he cannot even understand them, because they are spiritually appraised." He doesn't even have the capacity to understand what the Bible teaches.

So, this refutes (I stress again) the New Age doctrine brought in from Hinduism that all knowledge concerning God already resides in man. This word "pleroo" is a participle. It's a spiritual principle. Christians have Bible doctrine as a frame of reference by which they are able to evaluate all other human knowledge. For this reason, Christians have capacity for a true perspective on life, which educated, intellectual, university-bred unbelievers cannot grasp. Why do we know that the increasing, strident voices we are hearing in behalf of evolution are false? Because we are all such great scientists? Because we have all done such great research? No, because we have the authority of Scripture that tells us exactly where everything came from; where we came from; where all life came from; and, where the universe came from. Therefore, it doesn't matter how intellectual the scientist is who is standing up and saying, "Evolution is the way it all came about." We know that he's wrong.

It is amazing that any simple Christian, with a knowledge of doctrine as a frame of reference, can listen to anybody in this world, and come right to the core of whether this is true or false, can judge immediately whether this is right or wrong. We are hearing increasingly shrill voices that there should be no distinction between the sexes. Men and women should be treated alike, and men and women should act alike. We should have a society in which there is no differentiation. Is that good? It would be to the destruction of the human race. How do we know that? We know that it is not good, not because we have carried on extensive studies at government expense, but because we know the basic principles of doctrine. God says, "That's not the way I constructed the world. That is not the social order that I have put together. And it will not work. And if you try to follow that kind of an order of no distinctions, you will destroy the human race.

There are some classrooms that now have textbooks that have been accepted in the public school system that are totally devoted to the destroying of the distinction between men and women. Everything is being reversed. And the result is that children are finding that they cannot identify with what they are, by nature, as males and females. It is the Word of God that gives us our frame of reference. We can say that the college university professor, with all of his degrees and all of his learning, is plum wrong when he states something that is not compatible with the teachings of the Word of God.

In 1 John 5:19-20, we read, "We know that no one who is borne of God sins;" that is, he does not sin as a way of life." If he does sin (and that's what the Greek indicates), God judges him: "But he who is born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him." Verse 19: "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one (that is, Satan)." Verse 20: "And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us (we Christians, who do not lie in the evil one) understanding, in order that we might know Him Who is true, and we are in Him Who is true, in His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life." We Christians have the information of the Word of God, so we understand how to evaluate all human knowledge. Bible doctrine enables you to check out the truth, and the meaning of what people say.

Natural human education leaves people without a basis for interpreting the information that they have. Colossians 2:8-10 give us a little more perspective on this. Paul says, "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception." He's talking about the human viewpoint opinions on the meaning of life: "According to the tradition of men (according to the elementary principles of the world), rather than according to Christ." That's what we're talking about. Don't let somebody from psychology, psychiatry, or philosophy con you. These people are conveying to you the best that human thinking can come up with. And they’re wrong. They short-change the human race. But we who have the mind of Christ through doctrine, we're the ones who can judge the truth: "For in Him, all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form." He is very God of very God: "And in Him, you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rules and authority. You Christians are complete in Jesus Christ. You have full capacity to understand the truth.

Go back up to Colossians 2:2-3: "That their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in true knowledge of God's mystery (that is, Christ Himself), in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." You Christians, indwelt by Jesus Christ, are filled also with all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. So, true knowledge begins with the understanding of God as the sovereign living Creator, rather than as the impersonal force of Hinduism supposedly residing in all men. The Christian with a knowledge of doctrine is able, again, to help the spiritually weak, and not to abuse him. It is the knowledge of doctrine which, in turn, will transform your conduct.

Colossians 3:1-3 indicates that, when Paul says, "If then you have been raised up with Christ (as you have in your salvation), keep seeking things above (where Christ is – seated at the right hand of God)." That's the problem again. We don't look up. We're always looking down. We don't keep seeking, first of all, the things of the Kingdom of God. We're seeking all those crazy things of our own lives all the time: "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth." It's really tough to get somebody to come out and fix something on the church property, because their eyes are on improving their own houses: "For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." It's a perspective. And it is doctrine that gives us a true perspective.

**Advise One Another**

So, the apostle Paul says to these Christians in Rome that he himself has an opinion on the basis of information that he has received. They are full of goodness, a quality from the Spirit of God, because they're filled with the Spirit of God. And they are furthermore completely full of the knowledge of doctrine. They have a perceptive-mind understanding. They're also able, therefore, to do something. And that is that they have an ability (they have a capacity) to be able to admonish. The Greek word looks like this: "noutheteo." This word means "to advise." It is God's purpose that you Christians, who are filled with the goodness of God, because of your status of being filled with the Spirit of God, and because you have a knowledge of doctrine up in your head (whatever you've done with it), you are in a position to be able to advise one another.

Here is a tough role for the individual Christian to play. Spiritually mature Christians had the goodness of the Holy Spirit. They have the knowledge of doctrine which enables them to give spiritual advice to other believers. Very often Christians want some advice (some guidance), and they go to someone who does not understand spiritual truth. That's why it is a Bunko game to go to a psychiatrist or psychologist out in the secular world. These people know nothing. They cannot give you any advice that is a true perspective from God. They are poor sinful men, struggling with their own sinfulness, and producing inanities of advice. If you're going to go for advice, go seek it from a Christian who demonstrates the goodness of God and a knowledge of doctrine.

**True Counseling**

Christians, however, who have that are then in a position to be able to remind each other of God's grace and God's ways. Paul says that the Romans Christians, he is aware, are well-qualified to be able to instruct each other on spiritual things. This is what true counseling is all about. True counseling in the Bible is teaching the principles of doctrine to the people of God. And when people are positive to what they have learned, their mental and emotional state becomes stable. Every time you are in a church service where the Word of God has been explained to you, on the authority of the languages of the original Bible, you have received counseling. You should not walk out of this room without paying at least $100 this day for the valuable counseling session that I have given you. And you don't even have to pay me for it. You should at least smile at me as you leave. But that $100 ought to go in that offering box.

You'd give this to a counselor out there in the secular world if you went to see one of those jerks. And they would charge you. And most of the time that you talked to them, you'd tell them what your problem is, and they'd say, "Well, what do you think about that?" And you'd say, "I think it's awful." Then they'd say, "Well, what do you think you should do about that?" And you'd say, "Well, I think I should do this and that." And they'd say, "Well, do you think you'd feel good about that?" And you'd say, "Yes, I think I would." And they'd say, "Do you think you'd be happy if you did it?" And you'd say, "Yes, I would." And they'd say, "Well, what do you plan to do?" And you'd say, "I'm going to go out and do that." And they'd say, "OK, will you pay the lady at the desk as you leave?" Well, who's giving advice to whom? I mean, you can laugh, but I'm telling you that this is how it works. You just draw it out of the person. After all, all this knowledge and information is already in him.

God's Word says, "That's not so. You Christians in Rome are well-qualified to advise one another because you have the information of doctrine in your minds." So, the local congregation, the apostle Paul is telling us, should be a mutual aid and improvement society through the spiritual principles of doctrine. That's what we are all about – a mutual aid and improvement society. Most churches are social centers of entertainment for various groups, and you have only to look at their program of activities to see how they are social centers. They have the single parent events; they have the double parent events; they have the no-parent events; and, they have every category under the sun for various social activities. And in such groups, Christians actually are usually embarrassed to even be talking to each other about the living Word of God.

Christians instead should, on the one hand, be examples of integrity to all the rest of the believers in the congregation, and they should be so well-versed in doctrine, and so walking with the Lord, that, when they see somebody who is living in a way that is incompatible with the Word of God, that they are not hesitant to come up and say, "As your brother and sister in Christ (as your friend), I want to advise you that what you're doing is not a good idea. It is really a violation of a basic biblical principle, and it will lead to a great deal of unhappiness for you, and injury to other people. Stop it. Straighten it out. Do right."

Now, I assure you that if you choose to do that, you will also be rejected. And you must be prepared to be rejected. You must be prepared even to be cut down. But you must understand, that at that point, you leave it with the person. You leave them to the Lord, and you walk away. But you do have the responsibility, Paul says, "To be advising one another." He commends the Romans Christians for the fact that at least they are equipped to do it.

What kind of a person is in a position to advise other Christians? What kind of a person is equipped to be so bold as to come up to a Christian and say, "You know the way you're doing (this or that); the way you're living; or, the thing that you're pursuing, it's not good. It's not compatible with the Word of God. It's really out of line with the will of God for your life, because it's out of line with doctrine. What kind of a Christian can do that?"

Colossians 3:12 describes such a person: "And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience" – all these qualities as one who has been chosen for salvation, and who has been instructed in the Word of God: "Bearing with one another, and forgiving each other. Whoever has a complaint against anyone, just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. And beyond all these things, put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity." And this word for "love" is the Greek Word "agape" here, which means mental-attitude goodwill. Stop grudging, and having a critical grudge-holding attitude toward other believers.

I am amazed how Christians, who have been around a long time, who have had a lot of instruction, can obviously put their finger and spot a problem, and after they may have pointed the problem out, and maybe to someone who can do something about it, or to the individual himself – they do not have the Christian grace and maturity to step back and let the Lord solve it. There are some things that people should not be doing. There are some people in a local congregation that have attitudes that they should not have. And when you cannot bring about resolution, I can guarantee you that you can leave that person with the Lord, and they're going to be jerked out by their hair roots. They will be brought down. In a work which is seeking to do the will of God, and is dedicated to that objective, that person will not be able to continue doing what is wrong.

So, it behooves all of us to take a kind of a very humble attitude about what we're doing, and not get too emotionally dogmatic and bulldogging to snap onto something such that we will become so unyielding, but to be willing to take the advice that maybe there is a better way, and maybe, in time, God has His way of resolving the problem. Many Christians, by bad advisers, are panicked; are propelled; or, are ramrodded into an action that is not of God, and that does not give the Lord a chance to work.

Verse 15: "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body, and be thankful. Let the Word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your heart to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father." Now, that's a splendid description of a qualified Christian adviser. Colossians 3:12-17 – read it over many times, and you will find the kind of person that you need to be, before you're prepared to step up and give somebody else some advice on their lives. Those who admonish must then, of course, leave the results with the Lord.

So, the apostle Paul has spoken very frankly and very boldly to these people. And throughout this book, he has called attention to their own weaknesses; to corrections that need to be made; and, to some misconceptions that have come back to him about what they think. And now he is ready to close down the book.

So, in verse 14, he proceeds to reassure them that he's not mad at them. He is their friend. He has acted as a drill instructor, but he knows what he's doing. And he comes at this from God's viewpoint; from the basis of a knowledge of doctrine; and, from a heart which is controlled and guided by the Spirit of God. Therefore, he says, "As I have admonished you, I am confident that you too, if you approach it in the same way, are competent to admonish one another, and that indeed you should do.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1988

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