

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

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THE BELIEVERS
FOR THE
CHURCH LIFE

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Living Stream Ministry

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The gospel of Romans is wonderful. In the first eleven chapters Paul completely covers justification, sanctification, glorification, and selection. If we read these four main sections, we shall see that God has accomplished nearly all that He intended to do. In [Romans 1 through 11](#) we can see God's creation, man's fall, Christ's redemption, God's justification, and God's reconciliation. Furthermore, Paul unveils to us God's identification, the life process of sanctification, and glorification. Also Paul leads us into the source of all of God's activities—His heart of love. Paul also leads us into the secret chamber of God's selection where we can see His economy. What a panoramic view! Although all of these items are wonderful, none of them is the ultimate consummation of God's work.

The ultimate consummation of God's work is the church life. Satan is subtle and has caused many of the dear, seeking Christians to even hate the word church. Many Christians uplift sanctification and life, but seem to cast the church

behind their back, not caring for it, and even opposing it. Most of them hold the erroneous concept that the church is not for now, but for the future. Hence, whenever we talk about the church we find ourselves in trouble. This is the subtlety of the enemy. Nearly two thousand years ago the Lord Jesus promised that He would soon return; yet He has not come because the church is not ready. Where is the church properly built as the Lord mentioned in [Matthew 16:18](#)? Without the church properly prepared, there is no way for the Lord Jesus to return. His coming back requires two things: the restoration of the nation of Israel and the recovery of the church life. If you understand prophecy, you will realize that these two matters are the greatest signs of the Lord's return. The restoration of Israel and the recovery of the church are necessary for the Lord's coming back. Without this preparation it is impossible for the Lord to return. In the church life we are preparing the way for His return. Every day we read in the newspapers regarding the events in the Middle East. All that is occurring there is the preparation for the restoration of the nation of Israel. Although I am assured that the Lord is working in the Middle East, I am quite concerned about His work among us. He must match His

work with Israel by His work with the church. Thus, we must pay our full attention to the church life.

After eleven chapters of discourse in Romans, Paul comes to the ultimate point, the church life, in [Romans 12](#). Paul uses five chapters to cover the church life. The section on the church life begins in a specific manner, with Paul saying, “I beg you therefore, brothers” ([12:1](#)). Paul was begging us to present our bodies physically and practically for the church life. After begging us to present our bodies for the church life, Paul proceeded to the second part of our being, our soul, and spoke to us regarding our need to be transformed by the renewing of our mind ([12:2](#)). Our soul needs a radical, essential, and metabolic change in both nature and form. Our whole being needs to be changed for the sake of the church life, for nothing natural, common, worldly, or modern is suitable for the Body life. We need a metabolic transformation through the inward working of the divine life element. We need a radical revolution in our thought, emotion, and will. Once we undergo this kind of metabolic transformation in our whole being, we shall be good for the church life. Furthermore, once our body has been presented and our soul transformed by the

renewing of our mind, our spirit needs to be burning. Our spirit must be set on fire. If we have all of these qualities, we shall see out of the growth in life the manifestation of the gifts of grace in life. The different gifts and functions will begin to emerge. We must not be like pew-sitters in the so-called churches who go to the church building and sit in their pews as dead members without any function. Such people can never participate in the church life. The people in the church life must have their bodies presented, their souls transformed by the renewing of their minds, and their spirits burning. Then the necessary gifts will be exercised, and we shall have the church life.

For the proper church life, we need the proper Christian life. Therefore, beginning at [12:9](#) and continuing through [13:14](#) Paul covers the normal Christian life. In this portion of Romans Paul covers many points: our attitude and behavior toward God, our fellow members, ourselves, and our persecutors; our attitude toward the government and the established authorities; the exercise of the principle of love; and the warfare against the flesh. In order to practice the church life, we need to have a normal Christian daily life, a life which matches the church life. We need to have

our body presented, our soul transformed, our mind renewed, our spirit burning, and our gifts exercised. Thus, at the end of [Romans 13](#), the church life has been portrayed and the Christian life adequately defined.

RECEIVING THE SAINTS

However, there is still a great need. We must take care of the matter of receiving the saints. In the matter of receiving the saints, we need to exercise the discernment which is derived from the practicing of the church life and the living of a normal Christian life. If we are unclear about receiving the believers, we shall damage the church life and cut it into pieces. We shall resemble a person who, in so many details, takes care of his physical body, but is negligent about a particular matter which can cause death. If we are not careful about receiving the saints, the church will be mutilated. During the more than forty years I have been in the church life, I have met a good number of dear saints who proclaimed that they had seen the Body, but who, after a short time, became divisive over doctrine, damaged the church, and cut themselves off from the fellowship of the church. Therefore, I say that we must be very careful about properly receiving the believers.

In order to receive our fellow believers in the Lord, we need transformation. If we remain natural, we shall be unable to go along with others. In fact, according to our natural disposition, we cannot even agree with ourselves consistently. We all fight with ourselves. Thus, it is very difficult for any Christian remaining in his natural disposition to go along with others. Receiving the saints requires transformation. I believe that Paul's word in [Romans 12:2](#) concerning being transformed by the renewing of the mind not only governs the section in this book on the practice of the Body life, but also all the other chapters relating to the church life. Transformation governs the items found in [chapter thirteen](#) as well as some of the aspects of [chapters fourteen and fifteen](#). If we are not transformed to at least a certain degree, we shall be unable to be one with other believers. Although we may meet with them, we shall be unable to fellowship with them or to open ourselves to them. If we were to open ourselves to them, we would end up fighting with them because we are untransformed and so natural in our concept, behavior, and all that we are and do. Thus, in order to receive our fellow believers, we need transformation.

ACCORDING TO GOD'S RECEIVING

We must receive the saints according to God's receiving of them. Whomever God has received, we are compelled to receive. We have no choice. Consider a family with many children. Some of the children are good and others bad; some are sweet and the others naughty. Perhaps in such a large family some of the children may not be happy with all of their brothers and sisters. However, the children must realize that it does not rest with them to determine who their brothers and sisters will be. That depends upon the parents. Our heavenly Father has brought forth many children, many Christians, and He has received them all. Therefore, we also must receive them, not according to our tastes or preferences, but according to God's receiving.

However, most of the receiving of the believers in Christianity is not according to God's receiving, but according to doctrinal concepts. Consider the example of baptism. There are many different concepts about baptism. Some people insist on sprinkling, some on immersion, others argue about the name in which we baptize people, and still others argue against physical baptism, claiming that baptism is purely spiritual.

How many different schools of opinion there are over this one matter of baptism! This is dreadful. And this over just one doctrine! It would take us months to cover all the differing doctrinal concepts, such as eternal security, predestination, free will, rapture, etc. Even the teaching of head covering has caused some divisions.

No one can say that the churches in the Lord's recovery are heretical. We believe that the Bible is the Word of God and is divinely inspired word for word. We believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that He was incarnated as a man and lived on this earth, that He died upon the cross for our sins, that He was resurrected physically and spiritually, that He has ascended to the heavens and is the Lord of all at the right hand of God, and that He dwells within us. We believe in the unique God, the Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. We believe that the Lord Jesus is coming again and that He will establish His kingdom on the earth. There is nothing heretical about any of this. Nevertheless, some people criticize us and find fault with us because we do not agree with all of their opinions regarding doctrine. Some insist upon baptizing others three times and demand that the church practice this. However, if we make this our practice,

we shall denominate ourselves as a “three-times-baptizing church.” Others insist on speaking in tongues. Undoubtedly, the Bible includes tongue-speaking, but we cannot make the church a tongue-speaking church. The church must be general. Many dear saints have attempted to make the church in the Lord’s recovery into a particular kind of church according to their doctrinal concept, but we simply cannot agree with that.

The history of Christianity is a history of division and confusion. Much of this division has been caused by divergent doctrinal concepts. We have learned this lesson after a thorough study of church history, and we do not want to repeat the tragedy of the history of Christianity. Therefore, we will never argue about head covering or baptism or holy days or about the wine used at the Lord’s table. We will never dispute about trifling matters such as the bread and the cup used at the Lord’s table, the kind of water used in baptism, and the way of baptizing people. The Lord’s recovery is not concerned with that. The Lord’s recovery is for Christ as life and for the church as the expression of Christ in unity in each locality. We must be careful not to receive people according to doctrinal concepts, but according to God’s receiving.

Paul knew how important was the matter of receiving the believers, and consequently he devoted all of [chapter fourteen](#) plus part of [chapter fifteen of Romans](#) to this subject. In [Romans 12](#) we see the Body. In [Romans 14](#) we are given a warning. If we do not take heed to this warning, we shall use doctrine as a knife to cut in pieces the very Body revealed in [chapter twelve](#). Many Christians talk about the Body of Christ according to [Romans 12](#); nevertheless, they are responsible for killing the Body and for cutting it into pieces by wielding the knife of doctrinal divisiveness. This is why the Body that is revealed according to [Romans 12](#) must be lived out according to [Romans 14](#). Without [Romans 14](#) we are unable to have the proper practice of the Body unveiled in [chapter twelve](#). Many Christians pay attention to [Romans 12](#), but neglect [Romans 14](#), talking about the Body, but remaining divisive and divided because they continue to hold to their doctrinal concepts. They are unwilling to drop them. Thus, it is impossible for them to experience the Body life. Therefore, Paul, after revealing the proper church life and the normal Christian life, takes up the crucial point of receiving the believers. If we do not care for this point, we shall commit spiritual suicide as far as

the church life is concerned. In order to have the Body life, we must receive the believers according to God's receiving of them in a general way, not according to our doctrinal concepts in a particular way.

Romans covers two doctrinal concepts held by the religious, Jewish believers: eating and keeping of days. Those who hold these concepts insist that certain foods are holy and that others are unclean, that certain days are holy and that others are common. They base their dietary regulations on [Leviticus 11](#). In their eyes, the Gentiles are little more than unclean beasts that eat everything. [Acts 10](#) shows that even Peter, the first apostle, was religious with respect to eating. His religious nature forced God to give him the same revelation three times regarding what is sanctified and what is common ([Acts 10:9-16](#)). When the Lord told Peter to "kill, and eat," Peter said, "Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean" ([Acts 10:13-14](#)). The Lord answered Peter saying, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common" ([Acts 10:15](#)). We see by this that Peter, like so many others, clung to doctrinal concepts because he was religious. When such people argue for their concepts, they think that they are fighting for the

truth of God. Actually, they are frustrating God's move in the building of the Body of Christ. No doctrinal concept should be our ground in receiving the believers. The only ground for us to receive the believers is God's receiving.

Receive Him Who Is Weak

In [Romans 14:1](#) Paul says, "Now him who is weak in faith receive." Some believers are weak in faith because they have not yet received much of the transfusing and infusing of the element of God into them. Nevertheless, they do have a measure of faith and must be received.

Some believers, being weak in faith, dare not to eat everything or to regard every day the same. Yet they do have a measure of faith and are genuine believers in Christ. So, based upon this measure of faith of theirs and the fact that they are believers, we must receive them.

Not Passing Judgment

We need to read all of [14:1-5](#). "Now him who is weak in faith receive, not with a view to passing judgment on reasonings. One believes that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat

judge him who eats, for God has received him. Who are you that judges another's household servant? To his own lord he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand. One judges one day above another, another judges every day alike. Let each be fully persuaded in his own mind." In [Romans 14](#) Paul himself was an excellent example of not passing judgment on doctrinal reasonings, for he did not express his opinion about which doctrine is right or wrong. Certainly he knew the correct doctrines about eating and about the keeping of days. Nevertheless, he did not take sides, but charged all of us to be general and not to criticize others. Let others be free to eat whatever they want and to keep whatever day they want. To them one day is holier than another, but to the ones who are stronger in faith every day is the same.

We also must learn not to pass judgments on doctrinal reasonings. When people ask you about the method of baptism or the kind of water used, you should not get into a doctrinal argument. In other words, do not make a judgment on the matter. The best way to reply to doctrinal questions is to help people to turn themselves from doctrinal concepts to Christ who is our life. By nature, we are all inclined to

convince others and to argue with them about our concepts. We must avoid that.

God Has Received Him

In [14:3](#) Paul says, “for God has received him.” This is the basis on which we receive others. As long as our Father has received a person, we must also receive him. We have no choice. Regardless how weak or how peculiar a believer may be, we must receive him.

All Are the Lord’s

Let us read [14:6-9](#). “He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. For none of us lives to himself, and none dies to himself; for whether we live, we live to the Lord, or if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s. For Christ died and lived again for this, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.” All genuine believers are the Lord’s. All have been born of the same Lord regardless of the way in which they have been baptized, of the food they eat, or the days they observe. [Verses 6 through 9](#) show us what is

important and what is not important. To live for the Lord and to belong to the Lord are important. As long as a person belongs to the Lord and lives to Him, he is all right. We must not place further demands upon him in accordance with our doctrinal concepts. If, on the other hand, we begin to argue about doctrine, we shall soon be divided according to our various concepts. We must care for the important things. As long as God the Father has received us all and as long as we believe in the Lord and live to Him, we should receive one another.

IN THE LIGHT OF THE JUDGMENT SEAT

Furthermore, we must also receive the saints in the light of the judgment seat. We need to read [verses 10 through 12](#). “But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of God. For it is written, As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then, each one of us shall give account of himself to God.” The “judgment-seat of God” of [verse 10](#) is the “judgment seat of Christ” of [2 Corinthians 5:10](#). The judgment at the judgment seat of God will be

held before the millennium, immediately after Christ's return (1 Cor. 4:5; Matt. 16:27; 25:19; Luke 19:15), and the life and work of the believers will be judged at that time (Rev. 22:12; Matt. 16:27; 1 Cor. 4:5; 3:13-15; Matt. 25:19; Luke 19:15). This judgment has nothing to do with a believer's salvation, for everyone who appears at the judgment seat of God will have already been saved. This judgment will judge the believers' life and work after they have been saved. This judgment will determine a believer's reward in the millennial kingdom (Matt. 25:21, 23; Luke 19:17, 19; 1 Cor. 3:14-15; Matt. 16:27; Rev. 22:12; Luke 14:14; 2 Tim. 4:8). The believers will stand before this judgment seat to give account to God of their life and work. Here is Paul's thought: we should not argue with others or criticize them, but take care of ourselves, because one day we shall stand before the judgment seat of God to give an account of our life and work after we were saved. Since this judgment concerns how the believers have lived before the Lord and what they have worked for the Lord after they were saved, and since the transformation of the believers has very much to do with this judgment, it is mentioned here in the section on transformation.

We must receive the believers in the light of the judgment seat of God. We should not criticize others, but judge ourselves. If we do not judge ourselves, we shall have to give an account before the judgment seat of Christ. Some sisters in a certain group cover their head with a long white covering and are accustomed to judging and condemning other sisters who pray without a covering or who, at best, only wear a small cap. Although these sisters cover themselves with a long white covering in the church meetings, some of them usurp the headship of their husbands at home. They need to judge themselves in this matter. Do not judge others, judge yourself. Whenever we are about to receive another believer in the Lord, we must exercise our discernment in the light of the judgment seat and say, "O Lord, have mercy on me. I am not worthy to judge my brother. Cover me, Lord. I want to be judged by You. I want to pass judgment on myself, on my life and living." This should be our attitude.

We should not criticize others, but should pass judgment on ourselves. If we fail to do it now, we shall stand before the judgment seat of God and do it then. We must all be enlightened by the judgment seat. Whenever a new believer

comes to us, we must exercise our discernment in receiving him. However, in the light of the judgment seat of God, we must judge ourselves more. Thus, Paul's thought in [Romans 14:10-12](#) is that we should not judge others, but let the Lord take care of them. We should judge ourselves. As we are about to judge others, let us remember that the Lord will reckon with us when He returns. This is a serious matter.

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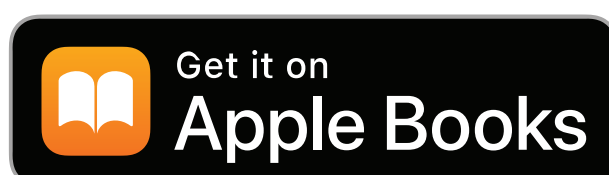
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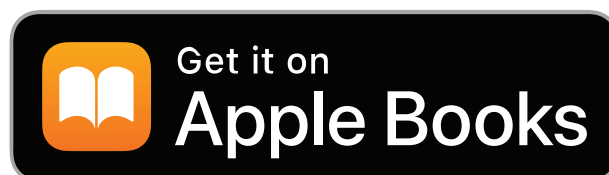
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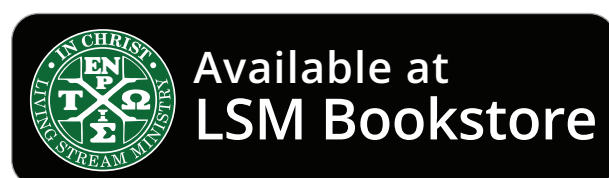
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