

TIME OF REFLECTION

“A local church’s elders do not rule on their own merits or according to their own designs but as subjects and delegates of Christ the chief shepherd.... Our elders may appear to be painfully ordinary men, but under their loving leadership, we receive the ministry of Christ himself....

“Our holiness is not merely personal. It is also the foundation of our corporate identity as the church. The surprising thing about the Bible’s testimony is that the word saints does not single out exemplary church members, or church members whose gifts and graces are only of a particular variety. In fact, in biblical terms, there are no individual saints. In its sixty appearances in the New Testament, the word is always plural and always used as a description of all the Christians in the church.... We are not lone saints...; we are corporate saints, members of a holy company....

“The church in eternity will appear more lovely, but it will not be more loved.”

~Megan Hill in *A Place to Belong: Learning to Love the Local Church*

“God allowed his Son to suffer as if a condemned sinner, so that we might be delivered from the penalty of our sins. This is God’s righteousness, that we are not justified by works (for then they would have to be perfect, which is impossible), but by grace, in which case all our sin is removed.”

~John Chrysostom (c. 347-407), early church leader in Constantinople

“And so, we, having been called through His will in Christ Jesus, are not justified through ourselves or through our own wisdom or understanding or piety or works which we wrought in holiness of heart, but through faith, whereby the Almighty God justified all men that have been from the beginning....”

~Clement of Rome (died c.100 AD), early church leader in Rome, from a letter written c. A.D. 96

“This epistle is really the chief part of the New Testament and the very purest gospel and is worthy not only that every Christian should know it word for word by heart, but occupy himself with it every day as the daily bread of the soul. It can never be read or pondered too much.”

~Martin Luther (1483-1546) in his commentary on St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans

“The body of Scripture is a doctrine sufficient to live well.... Theology is the science of living blessedly forever. Blessed life arises from the knowledge of God.... And therefore it arises likewise from the knowledge of ourselves, because we know God by looking into ourselves.”

~William Perkins (1558-1602), Cambridge-based Puritan theologian

SERMON – “A Letter to the Saints in Rome” – *Pastor Don Willeman*

SERMON PASSAGE – *Romans 1:1-7 (ESV)*

¹ Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, ³ concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴ and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, ⁶ including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

⁷ To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁸ First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. ⁹ For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without

ceasing I mention you ¹⁰ always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God’s will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. ¹¹ For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you— ¹² that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith, both yours and mine. ¹³ I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles. ¹⁴ I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. ¹⁵ So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”