Church Fellowship: Working Together for the Truth
Lamb of God Lutheran Church, Columbus, OH
Winter/Spring 2014

Lesson Three: Scriptural Principles – Romans 16:1-19
Church Fellowship, pp. 40-42

Goals

1. To examine church fellowship on the basis of Romans 16:1-19.
2. To look closely at the meaning of Romans 16:17.
3. To further develop our understanding of church fellowship principles and our desire to practice them.

Review

- What are the two pillars of the practice of church fellowship? How do they apply to dealing with false teachers and their teachings?

- How is *working together for the truth* (3 John 8) a good definition of God-pleasing fellowship?

Church fellowship in the congregation at Rome

Read **Romans 16:1-16** (p. 1126).

- What word recurs throughout this section?

- Note the many times the phrase "in Christ" or "in the Lord" appears in this section. How do those expressions emphasize the close bond of fellowship Paul enjoyed with his readers?

- List some of the ways Paul and the congregations at Rome were *working together for the truth.*

  - v. 1-2

  - v. 3-5

  - v. 6

  - v. 7

  - v. 9

  - v. 12

- List some of the words of commendation Paul has for those he is greeting. What lesson does that teach us about how we should live and work together for the truth?

- List some of the words of affection Paul has for those he is greeting. What does this tell us about the depth of feeling Paul had toward those with whom he enjoyed fellowship in Christ?

The congregations at Rome are to protect the fellowship they have in Christ

Read **Romans 16:17-19** (p. 1126).

- What phrases in verse 17 stand in sharp contrast to the word "greet" that was used so often in the previous verses?

- Who are the people the Romans were to watch out for and avoid?

- What are some examples from Scripture where people were causing divisions in the congregation or doing or teaching things that caused people to fall into sin?

  - Galatians 5:1-10 (p. 1154)

  - 1 Corinthians 15:12-14 (p. 1139)

  - Revelation 2:18-25 (pp. 1216-1217)

  - Others?

- In Greek, the verb "causing divisions" describes an action that is continuous and habitual. What does this tell us about the errorists Paul has mind? How does this insight help us apply this passage?

- Agree or disagree: We must know exactly what situation in Rome caused Paul to issue this warning before we can apply it to ourselves.

- Evaluate: The "teaching you have learned" is the doctrine about saving faith in Christ. It does not include other doctrines such as Baptism, the Lord's Supper, or the inspiration of Scripture.

- Whom does the world blame for dividing the church? Who is the real cause of division in the church?

- Examine each of these two statements about the meaning of verse 18 and tell which one is true: (1) We can identify false prophets by determining who is serving their own appetites and using smooth talk and flattery. (2) Anyone who departs from the apostle's teaching is serving his own appetite and using smooth talk and flattery.

Should Christians judge others?

When Christians are called on to watch out for and keep away from false teachers, they must be clear on what the Bible says about judging.

- Read **Matthew 7:1-5,15-16,21-23** (p. 961) and **Acts 17:11** (p. 1097). What principles do we learn in these passages?

Summary

Fellowship among Christians based on a common confession of faith is one of God's great gifts. It is a blessing when Christians share the truth and work together on behalf of it. The congregation at Rome furnishes a wonderful example of church fellowship. If Christians are to continue to be united in the truth and work together for the truth, they must separate themselves from any who teach error.

During the week

1. *Try* to find some passage(s) in the Bible that divide(s) church fellowship into levels or parts.

2. Suggested Additional Reading: *Church Fellowship,* pages 33-50.