

What Makes A Great Church, Part 10 - Romans 16:25-27 – December 29th, 2013

- Today's teaching will be part ten of a series titled, "What Makes A Great Church." With it, we bring both the chapter and the book to an end.
- Heretofore throughout this chapter, we've identified a total of fourteen characteristics of a great church, and today we'll look at the fifteenth.

15. Established Christians (Verses 25-27)

-v25 He says they're able to be established by the gospel and proclamation of Christ by revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past.
-v26 He says it's now revealed through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God so all nations might believe and obey him.
-v27 Paul in the final words of this amazing epistle to the Romans writes, "to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen."

- This is interesting for a number of reasons not the least of which is that these last three verses virtually sum up the entire Romans epistle.
- Let me explain, in the first chapter, Paul packs a powerful punch in his declaration that he is not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Here in the last chapter, Paul packs more punch in his proclamation that Christians can be established vis-à-vis the gospel of Jesus Christ.

- From front to finish, the unashamed gospel of Jesus Christ has the power of God for saving us, and the power of God for establishing us.
- Now, I am keenly aware that this may seem to be a firm grasp of the obvious, however, I would ask that you hear me out, not tune me out.
- Here's why, the common thread woven in the fabric of these last three verses holds the key to steadying and readying us for what's ahead.

- Here's how I get there, Paul knows all too well of the dangers that lie ahead for the church in Rome, and as such, he's encouraging them.
- So too is this true for the church today, such that, we need encouragement as we too face dangers that lie ahead for us in these last days.
- Namely, the increasing hatred towards us as Christians all over the world, particularly right here at home in the United States of America.

- Hatred so evil that should the Lord tarry it may actually have the propensity to crush those Christians that are not established Christians.
- In other words, the lukewarm Christian who merely plays church won't cut it when, not if, they are both hated and persecuted for their faith.
- I would suggest that this hatred and persecution of Christians is already happening and will get much worse as evidenced by the headlines.

- Consider these following headlines from just the last two weeks, which are only a small sampling concerning this hatred of us as Christians.

- [Christmas in Islamic world is a life or death experience](#)
- [Christians targeted by Baghdad bombs](#)
- ['Church' Expecting Festive Flock Of Atheists For Christ-Less Christmas Service](#)
- [Christians feel pressure to keep silent about their faith, Lord Carey warns](#)
- [Some Parents Upset After L.I. School Removes Religious References From 'Silent Night'](#)
- [Museum Removes 'God's Creatures' Quote From Exhibit](#)
- [The Dire Warning From British Royalty: Christianity Is Starting 'to Disappear' from the Middle East](#)
- [US TV star Phil Robertson suspended for anti-gay remarks \(Interesting to note that now anti-gay remarks are pro-Bible quotes\)](#)

John 15:18-21 "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. (19) If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. (20) Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. (21) They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me.

- Actually, this is the "why" behind the "what" of the text that's before us today. More specifically, it's exactly why we need to be established.
- Perhaps you'll indulge me for the remainder of our time as I attempt to delineate between the "why", the "what" and the "how" of our text.
- For those of you who were with us for our study back in Romans 12:2 on the renewing of the mind, this may serve as a needed reminder.

- By that I mean, absent a renewed mind thinking in a new way, we hear a sermon on being established, yet we never become established.
- This because, knowing how to be an established Christian, and what an established Christian will look like are insufficient to change me.
- The reason they are both insufficient is because only the "why" will motivate me, and enable me, to want to know "how" and do the "what."

- At the risk of complicating something that's actually quite simple, God made our brains with what I like to call the "big three," if you please.
- In looking from the top down, our brains have three major components, the outer neo-cortex is the what, and as such it's the rational part.
- The two inner components make up the limbic system of our brains, and as such they are responsible for our feelings, and our emotions.

- Here's how it works, once the limbic system of my brain physiologically understands why, it enables me to know both how and what to do.
- In other words, once the decision has been made, and the behavior controlled, the how and what I do can be rationalized in the neo-cortex.
- This is "why" we make what we call "gut decisions," or "follow our feelings." This is why we don't make decisions when it doesn't feel right.

- Enter today's text, Paul is telling us "what" we need, which is to be established, and he tells us "how" we can, which is by way of the gospel.
- More specifically, by unveiling the past mystery through prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, which is the Word of God.
- However, we start with the "why," which is the motivation to be so established in my faith, that I won't be uprooted when adversity strikes.

Colossians 2:6-7 NKJV As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, (7) rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.

- Bear with me as I close by sharing with you a concern for the church in these, the last days of world history as evil waxes worse by the day.
- I fear that Christians who are not established in God's Word because they're in churches that are not preaching God's Word may fall away.
- Please know, that this is why; as for me and my great church it's the whole Word of God and nothing but the Word of God, so help me God.