

Michael's Message

Many people are celebrating the end of 2018 as it has been a difficult year. Some of us have lost loved ones, others have experienced illnesses or injuries, and still others have endured crises. We are all hoping that we will only have good news, but we know that can't happen. Jesus does not tell us that we will not suffer from the troubles of this world, but he tells us that we will overcome the world.

We have finished our study of the *Book of Confessions*. Everyone seemed to enjoy the courses while learning about our unique traditions and beliefs. We learned how our ancestors coped with the challenges of the Reformation, the English Civil War, Nazi Germany, the civil rights movement, apartheid South Africa, and the reunion of the two main branches of the Presbyterian church.

We are now turning to the book of Romans. This book contains the phrase that began the Protestant Reformation: "For the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel by faith through faith, as it is written, 'The righteous shall live by faith.'" Romans 1:17 This one verse caused an earthquake that convulsed the church and still shakes and shapes us today. In this class, we will discuss this verse and its effects.

This verse is not the only influential passage in the book of Romans. There is also Romans 13 which discusses the Christian's relationship to the government, Romans 9-11 and the theme of God's relationship with the Jewish people, and Romans 8 and the insistence that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ. Romans is an immensely influential book and its study can help us understand our faith and give us new resources to guide our daily living.

I started this article about the troubles that many of us have experienced this year. I think Romans can be a very important resource for handling the problems of the coming year. The affirmation that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ gives me the assurance that we have nothing to fear. When Paul lists death, life, angels, demons, nor anything else in all creation as the threatening agents, it tells me that none of the troubles of the coming year can pose a problem for Jesus Christ or his disciples.

I hope that you will join us for the new study so that you can be reminded that we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. We will begin at 9:00 a.m. on January 13, 2019.

Michael

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