

RCC in the Word
Week of May 21
Acts 14:26, 15:40, 20:32

Commend (verb): entrust someone or something to (someone).

Entrust (verb): assign the responsibility for doing something to (someone); put (something) into someone's care or protection.

I find the snapshots of the early church we read about in Acts fascinating. In this week's reading of chapters 12-16 there was a phrase that jumped out at me, which I present here for discussion:

"commend(ed) to the grace of God/the Lord/God and the word of his grace,"

I find the secular culture grasping for some way to convey their desire to have another's circumstances be different and/or for that other person to be comforted, using quasi-spiritual expressions....curious. "Our thoughts/ thoughts and prayers go out to (you, the victims, the families, etc.)" I get it, people are trying to be nice, acknowledging others, sometimes even taking the opportunity to be seen by a third party noticing them being nice and acknowledging others. And while I appreciate the sentiment, I wonder what one is to do with the good-natured thoughts, or even prayers (of an unbeliever)? Perhaps these expressions provide yet another opportunity to share the gospel. Rather than thank someone for their thoughts which have "gone out to" us, we should recommend those contemplations to be redirected to the One who is able to effect such a desire if it is according to His will. What a great opportunity to open the discussion, and describe the reason for the hope that is in us.

Slowly I am learning "American Christianese." We have a number of expressions. I often wonder if they have lost their saltiness, becoming polite, insincere conversation...small talk.

The church in Antioch in Syria commended Paul and his companion to God/the Lord in chapters 14 and 15 respectively. Later, in chapter 20, Paul will commend the elders of the church in Ephesus to God and the word of his grace. What was going on in these interactions? These believers loved and appreciated one another. The church knew the work that Paul and Barnabas/Silas had done and were going out to do, the fruit it had produced, and the dangers that had and would present themselves along the way. In Paul's address to the elders in Ephesus he knows that he will not see them again, but wishes for their continued growth in maturity and to be alert.

In each of these scenarios, one party commended the other to God. That is, they assigned the responsibility for these things to be done to, and put them into the care of, the Lord. Did they

“let go and let God?” No. Paul instructs the Ephesians in his letter to “Put on the whole armor of God.” 1 Timothy 6:12 instructs the young pastor of that church to “Fight the good fight of the faith.” That armor to put on and the faith of which to fight are gifts of God’s grace that he has bestowed on us, and we are in the fight. Proverbs 21:31 says, “The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but the victory belongs to the Lord.” The human responsibility of the equation was not out of mind. However, they correctly presented the earnest desires of their heart to the Lord, recognizing that if anything were going to get done, it would be by his grace.

Forgive me if this discussion has meandered a bit. Taking all this into account, what lesson can we learn, what application can we make from this concept of commending one another to God? The commandment to love one another as He has loved us is astonishing. I think here is another opportunity to grow towards fulfilling it. Jesus commended his disciples (and us!) to the Father. John 17:11, 20 “And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one...I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”

I do love you all, albeit far from perfectly. I am so thankful to the Lord for placing me amongst this body of believers. There are always so many things going on in each of our lives where we can apply the “one anothers.” It is an honor to fight the good fight of the faith alongside you. For my part I will seek to know and understand you all better and share myself more, in the hope that we can sincerely commend each other to our Lord and God.

-Written by Jason Yocum