

## **Bibles???**

### **The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority**

Turn your bibles with me to Romans 15

We are continuing our verse-by-verse study through this life changing letter that the Apostle Paul wrote to believers in Rome about the Gospel of grace –

The fundamentals of Christianity

That our salvation is a work that God does –

He saves us from the penalty of sin

He is currently saving us from the power of sin

And one day – He will save us from the presence of sin

Justification

Sanctification

Glorification

So - for the believers that have put their faith and trust in Jesus, God continues to do a work in us – as He transforms us, by the power of the Holy Spirit – to be more like Jesus.

We simply abide in Him, we stay connected to Him, we lean on the Holy Spirit to guide us and lead us in everything that we do – how we worship, how we serve one another – and as we get to know Him more and more – we begin to care about the things that Jesus cares about, we begin to be obedient to the call that He has for us individually, and we begin to love the things that Jesus loves

And over the last few weeks – Paul has been showing that the only logical response to the gospel of grace is for us to present our bodies as living sacrifices – so that He can do the work from the inside – transformed by the renewing of our mind -

And one way this is manifested is in how we treat one another –

How we are to love one another- sacrificial love, agape love, love without hypocrisy, God's love.

Meaning that more often than not in our Christian walk – we will have to make sacrifices for the sake of unity.

Where we understand that in Christ – we have freedoms, we have liberties –

But at the same time – we have to be careful with the exercise of our liberties for the sake of our brothers and sisters.

We all want peace and unity with our brothers and sisters –

But in order to have peace we have to think like a church, we are going to have to behave like a church

**[Psa 133:1-3 NKJV] 1 A Song of Ascents. Of David. Behold, how good and how pleasant [it is] For brethren to dwell together in unity! 2 [It is] like the precious oil upon the head, Running down on the beard, The beard of Aaron, Running down on the edge of his garments. 3 [It is] like the dew of Hermon, Descending upon the mountains of Zion; For there the LORD commanded the blessing—Life forevermore.**

Beautiful picture of God's anointing and refreshing upon His people – for those who dwell together in unity.

I have titled this study - "Enjoying and sharing God's love in unity"

Let's pray...

Read Text

Good doctrine leads to right living.

Over the last few weeks –

We've been talking about how to handle differences of opinions on the "gray" areas.

There are many things that are clearly "black and white" for the Christian, but there are also many things that might be okay for some and not okay for others.

This was a problem 2000 years ago in the early church in Rome and it is a problem in the church today.

Instead of unity among the brethren, instead of receiving one another - there is division – over the nonessentials.

I want us to think how important the issue of unity is among the brethren – this is the third week on Sunday morning that our text has centered on Christian unity –

One of the things we have to understand is that our Christian walk is a walk with others –

Jesus never intended that we would walk in isolation

One the contrary – He called us to unity.

Jesus said He would build His church – not that He would build individual isolated Christians.

Peter writes in 1 Peter 2:5 that are as living stones, built together by the Spirit – you and I are those stones – and one stone, does not a make a building.

It's as we fit our lives together and join one another side by side that we find our own sense of purpose and meaning fulfilled in the larger work God is doing.

Again – unity!!!

Jesus in the real Lord's prayer – John 17 –

He prays for His disciples and us to be one – unity

**[Jhn 17:11 NKJV] 11 "Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, **that they may be one as We [are].****

Jesus casts the unity of His people as the evidence of the Unity of the Godhead

In a world divided by sin, it was the love and unity of the Church, Jesus said, that would stand as the single greatest testimony to Him

Division weakens the church

Divisions hide Christ

Divisions hide the gospel

While fortified fellowship (unity) – allows the church to do what it was called to do.

To be the salt and light of the world.

To point people to Jesus

So the question is asked -

What do we do when we come up against someone who has different convictions about one of these “gray” areas than we do?

And so Paul continues to provide us with practical answers to maintain unity.

How are we going to live with one another

How are we going to continue to minister to one another

How are we going to continue to experience peace

Because the explosive issues of the day – were threatening to divide the church in Rome.

**[Rom 15:1-13 NKJV] 1 We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves.**

Remember –

When Paul speaks of the strong – he is speaking of those who walk in liberty – the Carnivores for Christ camp – those how ate meat offered up to idols with no convictions.

The weak – was the other camp – the ones who responded to their convictions – the ones who felt that God would be disappointed if they ate the meat that was offered up to idols.

And so,

Paul places the burden of caution on those who HAVE liberty.

Those who are strong in the faith are supposed to carry the weak.

So – for the sake of unity, we exercise caution as to whether we exercise our liberty

Now, for the person who says – “wait a minute Paul, why should I give up my freedom”

“why should I give up my liberties”

“why should I voluntarily restrict my behavior to make someone else happy”

Paul’s answer –

When we consider the sacrifice of Jesus

When we consider His death on the cross

When we consider what Jesus was willing to do – to save us

How is it - that whatever decision we take to voluntarily set aside a particular privilege in order to provide harmony and unity – how is that a big deal?

In a healthy church – the mature help the immature

The strong help the weak.

The strong demonstrate compassion and sensitivity to the needs of others.

Claiming our liberty must never over-ride our concern for the spiritual well-being of others, because we’re defined by our love as followers of Christ.

By the way – when Paul says that the strong are supposed to bear with the scruples of the weak – it doesn’t mean that we are simply to put up with them.

It doesn't mean reluctantly accept.

It means to carry along with tenderness.

To carry on their shoulders

Not because they have to but because of the deep desire that God has placed in our heart to love and care for one another.

**2 Let each of us please [his] neighbor for [his] good, leading to edification. 3 For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me."**

We don't just want to make people happy when we "please" them.

We want to seek to build them up in the Lord.

We ought to act this way because it's what Jesus did.

Remember, The goal of a disciple is to be just like his/her rabbi.

Since Jesus lived His life to glorify God by blessing others, that's what we're called to  
Paul – in verse 3 - is quoting from a Psalm of David, one that was known to be prophetic, looking forward to the coming of the Messiah.

The passage is speaking of people who are mad at God, and so instead of yelling at God, they yell at people who they connect with God.



The insults and rebukes that Jesus faced while He hung on the cross - ultimately came from people who were mad at God.

Yet Jesus faced them anyway.

And in the same way – we are called to do the same.

Turn to Phil 2

**[Phi 2:5-8 NKJV] 5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, [and] coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to [the point of] death, even the death of the cross.**

If Jesus could lay aside all His rights & eternal glory to take care of our need,

We ought to be able to lay aside our rights out of concern for others.

**4 For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the **patience** and **comfort** of the Scriptures might have **hope**.**

Paul identifies three benefits in studying the Old Testament –

And I had you make a note of them

Patience, comfort and hope.

And the reason is because story after story – we always see the faithfulness of God.

It doesn't matter what book in the Old Testament we are studying – God always comes through.

Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob all had God's promise but had to wait years before seeing it fulfilled.

And when it was, it was far greater than they'd anticipated.

The waiting was necessary because God shaped them into those who could enjoy the fulfillment of the promise even more.

Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Ruth, David, Esther, & Nehemiah.

They all had to wait for the promise of God to come to pass.

But when it did, how glorious it was!

God never fails; He never disappoints. He always comes through.

And it's this consistent record of faithfulness that produces a confident hope within us.

But here is the question –

Why is Paul giving us this encouragement to be patient and maintain hope – here of all places where the emphasis is on unity?

And the answer is because he's calling the strong to forego their liberty out of concern for the weak.

They can patiently defer their liberty, knowing what they do in love for others, God will abundantly reward.

Patience, comfort and hope is what it's going to take to put up with one another.

Church – this is why we study the bible – it is the source of hope

It is the answer to life's most difficult questions

It is the answer to the problem of sin and the solution to the problem of sin – being Jesus.

**5 Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus,**

Paul knows unity doesn't come by human effort alone. It's God who knits hearts together.

So he prays for their unity.

This is a work that the Holy Spirit must do inside of us.

It is going to take God's patience and God's comfort for us to experience harmony.

You see – Paul understood - For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.

But Paul also understood and believed that where two or more are gathered – more often than not, there are going to be people with different opinions.

Like-mindedness doesn't mean we agree on everything – it means that we simply have the same perspective of what Jesus has done, of how we walked and taught along us, how He died on the cross for us, how He rose from the dead for us –

That is why in verse 6 – Paul says -

**6 that you may with one mind [and] one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 7 Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.**

The only way we as the church – with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is to know the truth and speak the truth about who God is and who Jesus is.

But it goes beyond that – we glorify God in doing what Jesus Christ did to us.

Here in verse 7 – Paul has come full circle

He repeats what he'd said at the outset in 14:1 – that we're to greet one another with warm affection, which is what the word "receive" means.

And we're to do it because it's the way Jesus receives us, with warm affection.

**8 Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises [made] to the fathers, 9 and that the Gentiles might glorify God for [His] mercy, as it is written: "For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, And sing to Your name." 10 And again he says: "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!" 11 And again: "Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!" 12 And again, Isaiah says: "There shall be a root of Jesse; And He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, In Him the Gentiles shall hope."**

Paul quotes 4 OT passages promising God's work of salvation among the Gentiles.

And so the point that Paul is making is that - It was always God's intention that the Gentiles be included in salvation.

Verses 8-12 were all meant to reinforce what Paul said in verse 7.

We are to accept each other because Jesus accepted us.

Jesus not only accepted God's chosen people the Jews, Jesus also accepted us yucky, icky Gentiles.

In fact He had planned on getting along with us all along!

We ought to get along with each other too.

As we yield to the work of His grace & Spirit we can be in unity despite our different convictions on morally gray issues.

**13 Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.**

This is a quick prayer of blessing Paul prays for the believers in Rome

He asks that their faith in God would produce peace & joy

Our faith in God ought to produce peace & joy.

Peace is for our relationships

Because we're in unity, our relationships ought to be free of strife, contention, envy.

As Paul makes clear in ch. 14, we don't allow our differences to become a source of arguments or judgmentalism.

Instead, we recognize because we ARE different & at different places in our spiritual pilgrimage, we're going to see things differently,

So we expect differences & determine ahead of time to encourage one another to live in the light of a spirit-informed conscience.

If peace is for our relationships, joy is for our circumstances.

God's kind of joy comes when we trust Him.

It doesn't matter what my circumstances are.

I know He's God.

I know He's in control.

I can get excited about waiting to see what He's going to do.

I had you make a note of the word hope –

Paul talked about it earlier in our text –

In fact, the word hope is found more times in the book of Romans than any other book in the NT

This is a book of hope

Jesus is our hope –

Our Living Hope

My hope is built on nothing less

Than Jesus' blood and righteousness

I dare not trust the sweetest frame

But wholly lean on Jesus' name

On Christ the solid rock I stand

All other ground is sinking sand

All other ground is sinking sand

There are two types of people in the world –

Those who have hope and those who don't

The world doesn't have hope because they stand on sinking sand

So the best that the world can do to be hopeful is to be hopeful on themselves

But for the believer – our hope is in Jesus Himself

He is the Solid rock

And when everything around me is sinking - can still find myself standing because hope is firm reliance on the Lord

It is not wishful thinking

It is firm reliance on the Lord

Our God is the God of hope.

There is no hope apart from Him.

Paul prays that this God of hope might fill the Christians with joy and peace in their relationship of trusting Him. The result of God filling us with joy and peace is that the Holy Spirit enables us to overflow with hope.



When I trust God, He gives me joy and peace. The Holy Spirit is able to use the joy and peace to overflow me with hope and maintain and share unity with others.

Amen!

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

According to biblical standards, it isn't the presence of supernatural spiritual gifts that mark a person or church as mature – it's the presence of loving devotion to the Lord and also to one another

The fruit of the Spirit – all of them are relational in nature –

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'



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