



Romans 15:1-13

LIVING IN UNITY

Just as surely as God desires to lead us to a knowledge of genuine Christian fellowship, so surely must we be overwhelmed by a great disillusionment with others, with Christians in general, and, if we are fortunate, with ourselves. By sheer grace, God will not permit us to live even for a brief period in a dream world. He does not abandon us to those rapturous experiences and lofty moods that come over us like a dream. God is not a God of the emotions but the God of truth. Only that fellowship which faces such disillusionment, with all its unhappy and ugly aspects, begins to be what it should be in God's sight, begins to grasp in faith the promise that is given to it. The sooner this shock of disillusionment comes to an individual and to a community, the better for both. A community which cannot bear and cannot survive such a crisis, which insists upon keeping its illusion when it should be shattered, permanently loses in that moment the promise of Christian community. Sooner or later it will collapse. Every human wish dream that is injected into the Christian community is a hindrance to genuine community and must be banished if genuine community is to survive. He who loves his dream of a community more than the Christian community itself becomes a destroyer of the latter, even though his personal intentions may be ever so honest and earnest and sacrificial. —Dietrich Bonhoeffer

In Romans, Paul has taught us that we are all condemned by sin and destined for death, but that, through faith, we are saved by the sacrificial death and victorious resurrection of Jesus Christ, we are sanctified through the power of the Holy Spirit, and we are sovereignly chosen and loved by God, who has given us a sure hope and destined us for eternal glory.

This is the gospel of Jesus Christ! This is the good news that should transform the way that we think and live in this world. This is the good news that should transform the way that we relate to, accept, and love one another.

In Romans 14-15, all of these great truths are put to the test. Can Jewish and Gentile believers truly love one another despite their differences in backgrounds and convictions? That same test confronts us today in our own relationships.

RELATIONSHIPS ARE DIFFICULT, STRESSFUL, HURTFUL, AND PAINFUL BUT....

1. Christ has called us to bear the _____ of the weak and to seek their good, even if it costs us.

Christ did not _____ Himself (cf. Phil. 2:5-8).

Christ bore our _____ against God (cf. Psalm 69:9).

Christ did all of this out of _____, for our good.

This paragraph sums up the themes of the letter as a whole... and it is probably the climax of the letter. —Thomas Schreiner

A suggested core for Paul's theology may be stated in the following way: God's eternal desire to redeem all peoples through faith in Jesus Christ is now made known through Jews and Gentiles united as one in His church under the Son's universal lordship. —Walter B. Russell III

Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle. —Ian MacLaren

Psalm 69 is a messianic psalm, written by David, and focused on his unjust sufferings as the king of Israel. It is the third most quoted psalm in the NT, after Psalms 22 and 110.

Pleasing others to advance their selfish interests is excluded. Pleasing others so that they will be stronger in the faith, however, is a beautiful quality. —Thomas Schreiner

2. God, through His Word, gives us _____ and _____ to keep us from giving up.

We need endurance and encouragement in our relationships.

God gives us this strength and encouragement through His Word.

God's Word gives us hope by revealing the bigger picture.

3. God is most glorified when we are _____ in Jesus Christ, praising Him with one mind and one mouth.

True unity is a _____ of God.

True unity must be focused on Jesus Christ.

True unity is expressed in praise.

True unity brings glory to God...and _____ to ourselves!

RELATIONSHIPS REQUIRE VULNERABILITY & SACRIFICIAL LOVE.

Therefore welcome one another
as Christ has welcomed you,
for the glory of God. (Romans 15:7)

So he returned home to his father.
And while he was still a long way off,
his father saw him coming.
Filled with love and compassion,
he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. (Luke 15:20)

RELATIONSHIPS ARE WORTH IT ALL!

All the promises of God point to the reconciliation of humanity to God and to one another, Jew and Gentile, every tribe, tongue, and nation, united together in praise, through trust and hope in Jesus Christ alone.

Satan always hates Christian fellowship; it is his policy to keep Christians apart. Anything which can divide saints from one another he delights in. Since union is strength, he does his best to promote separation.

—Charles H. Spurgeon

With One Mind/Together (15:6). Greek, *homothumadon*, "with one passion." A compound of two words meaning to "rush along" and "in unison". The image is almost musical; a number of notes are sounded which, while different, harmonize in pitch and tone. As the instruments of a great concert under the direction of a concert master, so the Holy Spirit blends together the lives of members of Christ's church. (Pierce)

Christian unity is unity in Christ. Jesus Christ Himself is the focus of our unity. Therefore the more we agree with Him and about Him, the more we will agree with one another. —John R.W. Stott

To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket – safe, dark, motionless, airless – it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. ...The only place outside Heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers and perturbations of love is Hell.

—C.S. Lewis