

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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The Diverse Family of Faith
Romans 15:5-15
August 19, 2018

There are two points to my message today:

- God is glorified when his people are one.
- The family of faith is vast beyond our imagination.

INTRODUCTION

As you know Paul wrote this letter to the Christians at Rome. They may have been persecuted a little bit, but they were not yet upon the terrible persecution that they would face in the future. No doubt, Paul's letter to them prepared them for the days ahead. The last two Sundays, we read about yielding to those who are spiritually weaker in order to build them up. We realized that Paul was being very bold when he when he wrote this letter, and his letter is just like a sermon.

1- GOD IS GLORIFIED WHEN HIS PEOPLE ARE ONE.

SCRIPTURE Romans 15:5-7

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, ⁶ so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁷ Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.

EXPLANATION

As I've said probably a hundred times, the idea of people from such diverse backgrounds coming together in Rome to worship together was a curiosity in and of itself because up to this time the pagan gods that had been followed and worshiped by people were usually were usually followed by segregated groups of people. Now we had people from all kinds of backgrounds coming together to worship, and it was such a curiosity in and of itself. The unity of believers from diverse backgrounds, coming together to form the church, was popping up in different parts

of the known world. It was just a new phenomenon. People had never seen this before, and Paul believed that the unity of people coming together with such diverse backgrounds would whet others' appetite to come and be part of it. But that oneness did not just happen. It happened because people endured, and God encouraged them.

Paul instructed the people to have the same attitude toward one another. Paul wanted them to endure one another and encourage one another. If you look at verse five closely, and you read it several times, I think you'll draw the same conclusion. When Paul said, "May the God who gives endurance and encouragement, give you the same attitude of mind toward one another that Jesus Christ had," it really leads us to believe that same attitude is an attitude of endurance and encouragement.

ILLUSTRATION

The idea of enduring one another...that's a strange phrase, isn't it? Have you ever endured somebody? Have you ever worked for the public, and you just endured some customers? Have you ever been at a family reunion, and you just endured that uncle that you saw once a year which was one time per year too much? Have you ever been in a classroom where you endured the class? Have you ever been in a church service where you just endured the preaching?

You know, endurance brings with it this idea of running a marathon. So, the idea of enduring one another sounds more negative than positive, doesn't it? But I like the idea of enduring one another because it brings with it this the idea that that we accept each other as we are. You probably learned that trying to change someone doesn't work. Have you ever tried to change someone? *I'm going to spend the next three weeks trying to change this person.* Then, three weeks later, where are you? Right where you began. Probably, somebody in your history has tried to change you, and their efforts probably failed as well. Why? Because we are who we are. So, let us accept one another with all of our differences.

Paul talks about endurance, and he says in verse five, "the God who gives endurance to endure trials." How many of you have endured grief? Anybody? Probably everybody here. How many of you are enduring grief now? How many of

you have ever endured a sickness, or maybe you're enduring a sickness now? It's God who gives endurance.

Next is encouragement. Genuine encouragement is the best medicine. Would you agree with me on that? People in helping professions tend to have a high burnout rate. Why is that? They become discouraged from giving all the time without any encouragement. If you know people in helping professions, encourage them. When I get a big project going at my house, usually with my cars, and I'll be in and out of the Auto Zone and other places three or four times a day. When I'm doing one of those projects, I always try to encourage those guys because I come in with the most obscure requests, and they have to dig, and they have to look. They've got to make other customers wait. They've got to put somebody on hold on the phone to help me. So, I do my best to encourage them. Yes, they're being paid to do what they're doing, but timely, genuine encouragement is always welcome.

APPLICATION

Some people are just standing in line for encouragement and never get it. Why don't you be that person that brings them to the front of the line and encourages them? Paul instructs us to pass along the encouragement that we receive from God. He tells us to have the same attitude toward each other that Jesus Christ had. This leads me to believe that when God's people are assembled together, we should spend time encouraging each other. It's my hope that every Sunday people leave church encouraged.

It's common for pastors from different churches to get together on Mondays for fellowship. The Baptist Association office is usually where Baptist pastors meet, and I've not been to one of those fellowships in a long time because we've got so much going on here, because I really don't want to fight the traffic and go downtown on Monday morning, but when I served in Kentucky, the Association office was about a 10-minute drive from the church. So, I used to go almost every Monday. I was the youngest minister in that group, and I enjoyed the fellowship with those guys. I remember on one particular Easter Monday, one of the pastors bragged about how he beat up those who attended church only on Easter Sunday. He was proud of himself for how he told everybody off the day before, and I wondered why he did that. I wonder why he didn't use Resurrection Sunday to

preach about the resurrection. Maybe he worked it in. I don't know, but it sounded as if his whole goal were to tell people off. He called them the Easter bunnies. He said, "I told the Easter bunnies off yesterday."

As I got to know this guy, I believe, down inside, he was just a frustrated guy, and he took his frustration out on people. Because of that, he missed a prime opportunity to encourage people. There's no other day that the Christian should rejoice more than on Resurrection Sunday. That should be the Sunday we all leave encouraged because of the resurrection. We have hope.

EXPLANATION

What's the purpose of enduring one another and encouraging one another? The scripture tells us that in our oneness God can be glorified. Our church has to be unified if we as a church are to be that secure harbor for people seeking calm. We must be unified. We must not quarrel over disputable matters. As Paul says in Romans 14, we must seek to do his will. If we don't do God's will, he will find another group of people to do it, and we will miss the blessing. I don't want to miss any blessings. Do you? As we are unified and as we decide not to quarrel over disputable matters, we must also not complain about petty things.

This past week I read an interesting article. It was a summary of a scientific article about the brain. Did you know that chronic complaining shrinks the brain? I could have guessed that, but now science has proven what I could have guessed all along. I am quite intrigued with the study, but endurance in this Christian life and enduring one another and encouragement to others will keep us from chasing petty things. It will keep us unified. When we are one, the rest of the world will know that there is something unique about the church. In fact, it's so unique, they'll want to be a part of it.

Verse seven goes quite a bit deeper, "accept one another as Christ has accepted you." Wow! That's a heavy verse, isn't it? Christ accepted us as we were. Christ accepted us in our sins, rough and completely unrefined. Let us do the same thing with others. Let us accept others, rough, completely unrefined, not knowing what to do, not knowing how to act. Let us accept others the same way so that, according to

this verse, we can bring praise to God. Acceptance of others brings praise to God in the same way that Christ's acceptance of us brings praise to God.

APPLICATION

Terry has asked several times for people to volunteer to let some of the children that he's bringing to church sit with you during the service. Don't we want kids to know how to behave? Some of you men teach these boys and girls how to give a good handshake. Boys have to learn how to shake hands right. When I shake hands with a four, five, or six-year-old boy with a good grip, I know somebody has taught that boy how to shake hands. We want to accept children who don't know how to behave in church. Somebody accepted you. When you were young, somebody helped you. Somebody coached you. We need to pass that on, and the person who comes in that has no clue about any of this, the person that doesn't know the difference between a Jew and the Gentile that I'll talk about in a moment, the person who just comes in and says, "What in the world is this all about?" We need to accept those people. We need to endure with their stories. We need to encourage them. We need to accept them so that we, according to the scripture, can bring praise to God.

So, when you look at these verses, what you have here is really a plan for church health which in turn promotes growth because the healthy body grows. My first point was that God is glorified when his people are one, and my second point is this. The family of faith is vast beyond our imagination.

2-THE FAMILY OF FAITH IS VAST BEYOND OUR IMAGINATION.

SCRIPTURE Romans 15:8-12

⁸ For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, so that the promises made to the patriarchs might be confirmed⁹ and, moreover, that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written: "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing the praises of your name."¹⁰ Again, it says, "Rejoice, you Gentiles, with his people." And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles; let all the peoples extol him." And again, Isaiah

says, "The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; in him the Gentiles will hope."

EXPLANATION

Paul quotes several Old Testament passages here. First, when Paul says "as it is written, therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles. I will sing the praises of your name," he's quoting 2 Samuel 22:50 and Psalm 18:49. If you look those up, however, you will see that the word in your English translation is probably "nations." It probably does not say "Gentiles." Why in the world did Paul quote the Old Testament and insert the word Gentiles?

If you look up that Hebrew phrase, you'll see that one English translation can also mean "Gentiles." There's a couple of other things here that make this really important and interesting. God's people in the Old Testament were one nation, singular, and even when they were a divided Kingdom, they were still one nation. They were still God's people. When the scriptures say "other nations," it meant other nations beside the one nation of God, and the only option available would have been Gentiles because the people of God were the Jews in the Old Testament. They were one nation; so, if any Jews in Paul's day were unclear about the scripture, Paul made it clear. He gave what I call the New Testament update to the Old Testament, and he said the word "Gentiles," which includes us. We may have some Jewish descendants here, but most of us are Gentiles.

In verse 10, when he says "rejoice you Gentiles with his people," he's quoting Deuteronomy 32:43. When you look that up, again, it says "nations," but Paul used the word "Gentiles." When he says in verse 11, "and again praise the Lord all you Gentiles. Let all the peoples extol him," he's quoting Psalm 117:1. Again, the Old Testament word here is "nations." Then he says again, "Isaiah says the root of Jesse will spring up," he's quoting Isaiah 11:10. When he says the root of Jesse, what he's talking about is the youngest of Jesse's sons. Your scripture translation might say "out of the stump of Jesse." The youngest son of Jesse was David who became King David, the king who the scripture says was after God's own heart.

This word, this reference, refers to more than one nation; it included Gentiles. This family of faith is vast beyond our imagination, and God called these people way back in Abraham's day. God set them aside so that they would bless the rest of the world, and many times they did it, and many times they did not. Then, at some

point, as you've heard me paraphrase before, God got tired of that arrangement, and he sent Jesus and opened it up to all people. Today's version of that is the church. God has called the church to bless all people

SCRIPTURE Romans 15:13-15

¹³ May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁴ I myself am convinced, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with knowledge and competent to instruct one another. ¹⁵ Yet I have written you quite boldly on some points to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me.

EXPLANATION

For Paul to stand up and make the statement that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God would sound like blasphemy to someone who had never heard it before because people believed that it would be impossible for Gentiles to be sanctified. They were the dirty people. They were the unchosen, but as we see, Christ opened the door. This family of faith is vast beyond our imagination. We do church our way, as we feel led to do it. We have certain traditions that we do. Some of those traditions may be good; some of them may not be good sometimes. We refine what we're doing. We change what we're doing, but if we go right down the road we'll see a group of people worshipping the same God and repenting of sin and trusting the same Jesus that we do, but they'll be doing it in a different way.

ILLUSTRATION

If we traveled around this world, we would realize that not all churches meet on Sunday morning. Not all churches meet on Sunday. A missionary friend of mine told me that when he led a group of people to faith in Christ in Africa, they really had no concept of days as in a week, Sunday through Saturday. They didn't really think in terms of months. None of them knew exactly how old they were. It didn't really matter to any of them. They just had a completely different way of thinking. They hadn't really thought through holy days, and one man in the group believed God was calling him to preach. He had an old trumpet, just an old castaway trumpet that came from who knows where, and any time he felt he had a message from the

Lord, he would just blow the trumpet. People would come and hear what he had to say. He said sometimes days would pass; sometimes people would hear the trumpet two or three times in one day, but think about it. They were worshipping the same God. They were repenting of sin and trusting in the same Savior, just in a different way.

APPLICATION

This family of faith is vast beyond our imagination. Paul was making it clear that this family of faith would grow if the people were one. We've got a great God. He wants to include all people in this family of faith. To be included, we must repent of our sin and believe. Trust God's only Son, Jesus. There's no other way but through him. Why would anybody want another way than through Jesus? The song says, "Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe. Sin has left a crimson stain; he's washed it white as snow." Some of you may not even know what the terms Jew and Gentle mean. No worries; you don't have to know. What you do need to know, what is most important is that you know Jesus Christ is Savior and Lord. There is no other way to God except through him.

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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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