

Living For The Glory of God

What is the most important way we can glorify God? Is it by building grandiose cathedrals to His name? Is it by raising our hands in worship? Is it by singing lustily to Him? Is it by putting bumper stickers on our cars? Or by wearing lapel pins of a cross or a fish?

Paul has been pointing out in chapters 12 through 15 of Romans the most significant ways we can and should glorify God. And in Romans 15:8-13 he comes to his climax in making his point. Since we're coming to some kind of conclusion of the book this morning (Romans 15 through the end of the book are similar to a postscript, containing some notes and greetings), I think this would be a good time to go back and just surf over the highlights of this great book.

From Romans 1:1 to Romans 1:17, Paul gave us a preview of what he was going to talk about. He tells us right away in verse 1:

1 This letter is from Paul, Jesus Christ's slave, chosen by God to be an apostle and sent out to preach his Good News.

Paul is going to talk about the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Good News. The Gospel which was promised and which concerned God's Son, Jesus Christ. The Gospel which Paul had received (Romans 1:5) and the Gospel to which we are called (Romans 1:6,7); the Gospel that he (Paul) is a debtor to preach (verse 14); the gospel that he is ready to preach (verse 15); the Gospel of which he is not ashamed (verse 16), and the Gospel which states that *the just shall live by faith* (verse 17).

The unfolding of that Gospel begins in Romans 1:18 and continues through Romans 3:20, and that section discusses sin. The first thing Paul says relating to the Gospel is found in Romans 1:18 NKJV:

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.

Then from Romans 3:21 through Romans 11:36, Paul talks about **salvation from sin** and all that is related to that salvation. Then beginning in Romans 12:1 and continuing to Romans 15:13, **Paul talks about how we need to express that inward salvation in the way we live our lives**. So we're now in and will be concluding today that section regarding practical Christian living. Now in this section we've talked about the practical aspects of the Christian's relationship with the Lord in Romans 12:1,2. In chapter 12:3-8, we learned **how Christians should relate to other believers** in terms of using our spiritual gifts. In chapter 12:9-21, we learned about **how we should relate to everybody**. In chapter 13:1-7, Paul spoke of **what our relationship should be with the government**. In chapter 13:8-10, we learned of the **primacy of love**. And in Romans 13:11-14, the **importance of time**.

So we're to have a proper relationship with God, to other believers, to everyone else as well, and to the government. These relationships are to be grounded in love and we are to do these things immediately because Christ may return at any moment.

Then in Romans 14:1 and continuing all the way through Romans 15:13, Paul discusses the relationship between strong and weak Christians. Here Paul sums up his discussion of salvation and all of the things connected with that salvation. Now in this same section Paul gives four principles to govern relationships between strong and weak Christians:

- 1) Receive one another with understanding (Romans 14:1-12).
- 2) Build one another up without offending one another (Romans 14:13-23).
- 3) Please one another as Christ was our example (Romans 15:1-7).
- 4) Rejoice with one another in the plan of God (Romans 15:7-13).

We come then today to the fourth principle. It is God's plan that the strong and the weak accept each other as Christians. We are not to struggle and argue among ourselves, but we are to accept each other, rejoice together over all that God has done, and live in peace and hope. **As Christians we should be thankful that His plan includes us.** Romans 15:7-13 emphasizes what the church is supposed to be: a community of believers all living together and loving one another as if we were one body. All of us are to be one in Jesus Christ, whether we are weak or strong, Jew or Gentile, black or white, male or female, natural born Americans or immigrants from other countries. We are all to be loved and accepted as one in Christ. Let's read Romans 15:7-13:

7 So accept each other just as Christ has accepted you; then God will be glorified.

8 Remember that Christ came as a servant to the Jews to show that God is true to the promises He made to their ancestors.

9 And he came so the Gentiles might also give glory to God for His mercies to them. That is what the psalmist meant when he wrote: "I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing praises to your name."

10 And in another place it is written, "Rejoice, O you Gentiles, along with His people, the Jews."

11 And yet again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles; praise Him, all you people of the earth."

12 And the prophet Isaiah said, "The heir to David's throne will come, and He will rule over the Gentiles. They will place their hopes on Him."

13 So I pray that God, who gives you hope, will keep you happy and full of

peace as you believe in Him. May you overflow with hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.

This call for rejoicing together because of the blending together of Jew and Gentile sums up Paul's argument regarding the weak and the strong. We are called in this passage to recognize and rejoice that God in His saving plan has brought all of us together, Jew and Gentile, weak and strong, and made us one body in Christ. In order to have unity in the church we have to avoid certain things. We have to make certain we don't cause someone to stumble, to be grieved, to be led into sin, to be discouraged, or distressed, or go against their conscience and therefore feel guilt. We are called to a positive attitude of rejoicing and that calling is essential. Sometimes when there's conflict, arguing, and bitterness in the church, the key to overcoming that is to cultivate an attitude of rejoicing, joy, and praise. Each of these believers were to patiently and lovingly bring one another along in unity. Let's look at the **basic instruction** which is found in Romans 15:7:

7 So accept each other just as Christ has accepted you; then God will be glorified.

Now if we back up a couple of verses we also see the **purpose of the church**, Romans 15:5,6:

5 May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other—each with the attitude of Christ Jesus toward the other.

6 Then all of you can join together with one voice, giving praise and glory to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Since God wants us to be one and that is the eternal design of the church, we have to accept one another. That doesn't mean just accepting people as members of the church and putting their name on a list. It means accepting them with affection and fellowship. This is a call to mutual love. And we see in verse 7 that **Jesus is the example** of what it means to accept others. Listen to what Jesus says in Matthew 10:40-42:

40 "Anyone who welcomes you is welcoming Me, and anyone who welcomes Me is welcoming the Father who sent me.

41 If you welcome a prophet as one who speaks for God, you will receive the same reward a prophet gets. And if you welcome good and godly people because of their godliness, you will be given a reward like theirs.

42 And if you give even a cup of cold water to one of the least of my followers, you will surely be rewarded."

WHEN YOU RECEIVE ANOTHER BELIEVER YOU RECEIVE CHRIST. When you receive Christ you receive God the Father. So receiving your brother or sister in Christ, though they differ from you in lifestyle, though they may not understand the same freedoms that you enjoy, though they may be different in some of the things they believe, and this doesn't

apply to basic Biblical doctrine but to certain practices that they're having difficulty letting go of, receive them genuinely with love. This wasn't an easy thing for the believers in Rome to do. Jews and Gentiles didn't exactly see eye to eye. Their past lifestyles were totally different. People needed to accept each other as they were.

One of the problems that occurs in the church is when people set up standards by which they'll accept or receive one another. If others don't meet those requirements, they shut them out. They won't want anything to do with them. We need to get the meaning of this whole passage and be able to accept one another **just as Christ received or accepted us.** Christ is our pattern, our model. Look at what is written in Ephesians 4:31-5:2:

31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of malicious behavior.

32 Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

1 Follow God's example in everything you do, because you are his dear children.

2 Live a life filled with love for others, following the example of Christ, who loved you and gave himself as a sacrifice to take away your sins. And God was pleased, because that sacrifice was like sweet perfume to him.

If you're a believer, Christ received you, didn't He? Were you worthy of Christ's acceptance? Do you think He looked down upon the earth and said, "*Ron Teed, you're irresistible. I just want to bring you into my kingdom because you're so desirable*"? Even if you're not a believer, Christ would accept you if you asked Him to. I know many of you know the passage in Luke 15, but I want us to read it again in light of what we've been discussing about receiving and acceptance, Luke 15:1-7:

1 Tax collectors and other notorious sinners often came to listen to Jesus teach.

2 This made the Pharisees and teachers of religious law complain that He was associating with such despicable people—even eating with them!

3 So Jesus used this illustration:

4 "If you had one hundred sheep, and one of them strayed away and was lost in the wilderness, wouldn't you leave the ninety-nine others to go and search for the lost one until you found it?"

5 And then you would joyfully carry it home on your shoulders.

6 When you arrived, you would call together your friends and neighbors to rejoice with you because your lost sheep was found.

7 In the same way, heaven will be happier over one lost sinner who returns to God than over ninety-nine others who are righteous and haven't strayed away!

If Christ has received those who are sinners; if He has received those who hated Him, shouldn't we forgive and accept the same kind of people? When a Christian refuses to accept another Christian, he or she is saying in effect that they know Christ receives the worst of sinners, but they require more. They have a higher standard than Christ. Are you

holier than Christ? Can He accept people that are not worthy of your acceptance? When a Christian refuses to open their heart in love to another Christian it is the same as saying, *“I know that Christ does that but He just isn’t capable of understanding my standards”*. Not one of us can come close to knowing what Christ sacrificed in order to accept sinners. As He received those who were unworthy SO MUST WE RECEIVE THOSE WHO ARE UNWORTHY ACCORDING TO OUR STANDARDS. Your failure to accept another believer because you resent something about them is an affront to Christ who received you.

Romans 15:7 also gives us the reason Jesus accepted us. **He did it for the glory of God**, and that is the same reason we are to accept one another. We do it because it reflects the love of Christ in us. We do it because it is God’s will that we do it. It brings Him praise. Our prayer for the church should be that we all know and practice this kind of attitude. We should make it one of our first orders of business not to squabble or show resentment or dislike toward one another. If a problem develops, discuss it privately in love with the other person and resolve the issue in that same spirit of love. We must understand that there will be differences in our understanding of Christian freedom, but that is not a cause for division.

Now you may find it worthwhile to consider the question, How does Christ receive sinners? First of all **He receives people gladly**. He doesn’t receive them with reluctance, but gladly. We saw that earlier in the passage from Luke 15. When Jesus receives a sinner he or she is received gladly. We don’t have to beg Jesus to receive us. He does it gladly. John 6:37:

37 However, those the Father has given me will come to me, and I will never reject them.

I heard a story that was supposedly true. There was a pastor in a southern town who was white and he opened his heart to teach the Bible to a black man. There was a sign out in front of the church that read: *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”* This black man was troubled and needed help, and this white pastor began to disciple the man. The church elders came to the pastor and told him to stop because he was creating a racial problem. The pastor, however, did what he knew was right and continued to teach the black man.

Soon the pastor couldn’t buy gas at the gas station or groceries in the grocery store; his insurance was cancelled, and his children were stalked and harassed. This is at a church that has a sign out in front that says, *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”* Finally the pastor had a nervous breakdown and was sent to the hospital. A church can have a theology and they can present it as the identifying mark of their fellowship, but in their hearts be living out something that is the exact opposite. We are to receive one another, not reluctantly, but with gladness.

Now secondly, Christ not only received sinners with gladness, but He received sinners in spite of their sin. They don’t have to clean up their act first. Jesus doesn’t say, *“If you get your act cleaned up I’ll let you in.”*

There is nothing you can do in the line of good works that will make you acceptable to Christ. The only thing you can do is to believe in what He did for you.

He receives sinners in spite of their sins and that's the beauty of grace, and that's the reason He came. When they come they are accepted. Listen to what Paul wrote to Timothy in 1 Timothy 1:12-17:

12 How thankful I am to Christ Jesus our Lord for considering me trustworthy and appointing me to serve Him,

13 even though I used to scoff at the name of Christ. I hunted down His people, harming them in every way I could. But God had mercy on me because I did it in ignorance and unbelief.

14 Oh, how kind and gracious the Lord was! He filled me completely with faith and the love of Christ Jesus.

15 This is a true saying, and everyone should believe it: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—and I was the worst of them all.

16 But that is why God had mercy on me, so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of His great patience with even the worst sinners. Then others will realize that they, too, can believe in Him and receive eternal life.

17 Glory and honor to God forever and ever. He is the eternal King, the unseen one who never dies; He alone is God. Amen.

Thirdly, **Jesus receives sinners impartially.** The Bible tells us in Acts 10:34 and Romans 2:11 that God accepts all kinds of people. It doesn't matter what your background might be. James 2:1-9:

1 My dear brothers and sisters, how can you claim that you have faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ if you favor some people more than others?

2 For instance, suppose someone comes into your meeting dressed in fancy clothes and expensive jewelry, and another comes in who is poor and dressed in shabby clothes.

3 If you give special attention and a good seat to the rich person, but you say to the poor one, "You can stand over there, or else sit on the floor"—well,

4 doesn't this discrimination show that you are guided by wrong motives?

5 Listen to me, dear brothers and sisters. Hasn't God chosen the poor in this world to be rich in faith? Aren't they the ones who will inherit the kingdom God promised to those who love him?

6 And yet, you insult the poor man! Isn't it the rich who oppress you and drag you into court?

7 Aren't they the ones who slander Jesus Christ, whose noble name you bear?

*8 Yes indeed, it is good when you truly obey our Lord's royal command found in the Scriptures: "Love your neighbor as yourself."
9 But if you pay special attention to the rich, you are committing a sin, for you are guilty of breaking that law.*

So we see that Christ receives sinners gladly, He receives them in spite of their sin, He receives them impartially, and finally He receives them for the highest reason. The reason as we've already seen is for the glory of God. Christ accepts sinners so that God will be glorified. God is glorified when a sinner is saved. Now you should have a thorough understanding of the basic instruction from verse 7.

I think you are going to find what follows in this chapter to be most interesting. The "*wherefore*" in verse 7 serves as a "*therefore*." And I'm sure you've heard pastors before say when you see a "therefore" stop and see what it's there for.

Paul feels very strongly about the points he has been making in chapters 12--15. Yet those points go against the grain of many of his Jewish readers, so now Paul is going to make his final argument to convince them of the importance of what he's been saying. They may choose to ignore Paul's words but no good Jew would blow off prophecies from the Old Testament.

After pointing out that we are to accept one another because Christ has accepted us, Paul gives two more reasons, in verses 8 and 9, why Christ became a servant to the Jewish people.

- 1) The first reason concerns the Jews. Christ came to confirm the promises made by God to their forefathers, or their ancestors. Paul is reminding the Jews that God always keeps His promises, and that God had promised to send them a Savior, a Messiah.
- 2) The second reason concerns the Gentiles. Another reason Christ came was so that the Gentiles could glorify God for salvation also.

Knowing that this latter reason could well ruffle some feathers among Jewish believers, Paul hurries on to cite in quick succession, not just one, not just two, not just three, but four Old Testament Scriptures that verify what he has just said.

These verses should soften Jewish prejudice and cause the Jews to rejoice over the salvation of Gentiles as a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy rather than allow Gentile salvation to create division and dissension. We see both Jew and Gentile in sin in the book of Romans and we see both Jew and Gentile saved in Christ. Romans is a declaration of the sovereign act of God to save both Jew and Gentile. In Romans 15:8-12 we find proof of Gentile equality in salvation. Romans 15:8,9:

8 Remember that Christ came as a servant to the Jews to show that God is

true to the promises He made to their ancestors.

9 And He came so the Gentiles might also give glory to God for His mercies to them. That is what the psalmist meant when he wrote: "I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing praises to your name."

Jesus comes as a Jew to Jews; initially as a servant sent to the Jews to fulfill prophecy, that is what had been foretold in the Old Testament. The ancestors in verse 8 being Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and God gives them the promise, beginning in Genesis 11, that a great deliverer will one day come. Christ came to fulfill the promises that were made by God to the fathers. Jesus came to verify the promises that God made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He came to verify that God speaks the truth. That's to the glory of God. But look at the Gentiles in verse 9. They can also glorify God for His mercy, for they have been given salvation as well as the Jews who were from the beginning God's chosen people.

In verse 9, Paul quotes Psalm 18:49. The psalmist here is David, writing a thousand years before Christ came, and he's saying he will declare God's name among the nations, that is the Gentiles. David is singing the praise of God among the nations. This is a foretelling of Gentile salvation. In Romans 15:10, Paul quotes Deuteronomy 32:43:

10 And in another place it is written, "Rejoice, O you Gentiles, along with His people, the Jews."

So all the way back in the time of Moses, almost 1500 years before Christ, Moses wrote about the Gentiles rejoicing along with the Jews (ONENESS). Then verse 11 is taken out of Psalm 117:1. Romans 15:11:

11 And yet again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles; praise Him, all you people of the earth."

Then in verse 12, Romans 15:12, we read:

12 And the prophet Isaiah said, "The heir to David's throne will come, and He will rule over the Gentiles. They will place their hopes on Him."

This is taken right out of Isaiah 11:1 and 10, written 700 years before Christ. The Messiah, Jesus, was to be a direct descendent through David's lines, which He was. Again a promise of salvation for the Gentiles, and salvation is hope. All are loved by God.

Paul closes with a benediction, Romans 15:13:

13 So I pray that God, who gives you hope, will keep you happy and full of peace as you believe in him. May you overflow with hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.

This is a prayer. Paul asks that the God of eternal hope, the source of eternal life, the source of eternal salvation will fill us up, leaving nothing out. It means literally that we might overflow with joy and peace that comes from believing in the atoning death of Jesus Christ. It's just another way of saying, "*May you get all there is to get. May you be totally spiritually satisfied.*" It's a prayer for a satisfied and peaceful soul. May Paul's prayer be answered in your life and in ours.