

May 20, 2018 -

Romans 15:1-7 -

“Disunity Stifles the Church”

Purifying and strengthening the Church Series: We began with “Secret Sin Hinders the Church” Joshua 7:1-13 and then from James 1:22-27 how “Indifference- Encumbers the Church” and several weeks on Isaiah 41:10-13 how “Fear Impedes the Church”...

Introduction:

Barna Research group reveals that Millennials who are opting out of church cite three factors with equal weight in their decision: 35% cite the church is irrelevance, hypocrisy, and the moral failures of its leaders as reasons to check out of church altogether. In addition, two out of 10 unchurched Millennials say they feel there is a sense of disunity in the church, starting at the front door. Folks, discord will strike a deadly blow at the work of God in HIS church.

Chaos, confusion, strife, envy, dissension, fighting, hatred, indifference to the needs of others, a lack of sacrificial love, hypocrisy, all of these things violate the unity of the church. The loving harmony and unity of the church is of grave concern to God. Paul taught that truth in this passage found in his epistle to the Romans.

I. A Call for Unity (15:1-6)

We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

1. One of the most difficult aspects of the Christian life is resisting the desire to have our own way and indiscreetly promoting our own personal opinions and agenda. Believers should realize that fussing and feuding strikes a deadly blow to the work of God in the church and cripples, if not destroys, the witness of the church in the community. Psalm 133, says, "**Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity;**

Trouble and divisions usually begin in a church when one person or group tries to get there way. 45 times in the New Testament we are admonish to care for one another in one way or another. Healthy spiritual change can only be brought about by the teaching of God's word and loving care for one another. Vv. 2 Let every one of us please *his* neighbour for *his* good to edification.

2. This verse gets to the root cause of disunity and divisions-selfishness. Paul taught, **Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Phil. 2:4** All too often, Christians find it easier to tear each other down instead of building each other up; this is a classic strategy of Satan against the church. Paul is talking about living a life of unselfishness that results in the edification of other believers and the winning of the lost. Selfishness will kill a church. In the church Paul taught that we are to think of others even more highly than ourselves. --- Romans 12:10

3. Paul then reminds his readers, **For even Christ pleased not himself but as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me (15:3).** He refers to Psalm 69:9 as an example of the unselfishness of Christ. **For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.** Peter in I Peter 2:23 explained the unselfish nature of Christ's where he

writes, “Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously.

4. Our first concern as Christians should be to please Christ and our neighbor whenever it will promote spiritual growth. Referring again to Psalm 69:9 with the phrase whatsoever things were written aforetime in Romans 15:4, Paul reminds us that the Old Testament was written for our learning that we through patience and confidence of the scriptures might have hope.

5. Paul knew that even a strong, mature believer must depend on the power of God to make personal sacrifices for the spiritual well-being of a weaker brother. Therefore, he prays in verse five, **Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus.** The reason that there are so many conflicts among believers is a lack of patience. Patience allows time for God to work things out and change people. Sometimes patience must last for years and thus we need God's consolation that we are doing the right thing. This assurance comes from studying the Scriptures.

6. In Romans 15:6 Paul prays that the believers who disagree on nonessentials will with one mind and one mouth glorify God even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This implies there may be legitimate differences of opinion on some things, but all believers should be in agreement that no one is to seek to please himself, but instead seek to please his neighbor for his good to edification (15:2). What a powerful witness it would be if all Christians were of one mind and one mouth.

II The Call for Conformity (15:7) (Selected passages)

1. Note verse # 7... **Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.** Instead of letting these issues about disputable things divide the body of Christ we should receive one another just as Christ received us - in the terms of pure grace, knowing yet bearing with our faults. Paul saw his ministry to Gentiles as a “sacred duty”. We need to have the right attitude mentally if we are to minister effectively. The goal is to produce a sanctified group one that is “set apart” for the glory of God. ...

2. Christian unity and following Christ’s example will result in joy, peace, and hope. Where there is disharmony there can be no abiding joy, collective peace, or hope for the future of the church. Harold Roberson used to say “The Lord cannot work in the midst of disunity. This unity and conformity is only possible through the power of the Holy Ghost. Paul wrote to the Church of Ephesus and explained this in the fourth chapter verse 1-7. The spirit is referred here in a way which emphasizes his work and power (the Spirit of "Truth").

3. Paul also wrote to Timothy explaining proper behavior in the house of God. There is a lack of respect today on how to behave in church. My generation was taught to respect the church and your elders. - **I Timothy 3:14-15** - He instructed him and the church about behavior that works together for the unity of the church.

First- strife is a desire to put one's self forward; it breeds disunity. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? I Co. 3:3---This is sinful behavior and should not be part ad parcel in the church._

Again in Philippians' 2:3---*Let nothing be done* through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Let's put others before ourselves. Romans 12:10 *Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; Discord is among one of the seven evil sins that God hates in **Proverb 6:16-19**. This is very strong language yet we often take it for granted.*

Second; disunity comes from a lack of respect to the leaders that God has ordained and placed to have the watch care over you. The goal of Christian leadership is to lead, not to be liked, leadership requires that you do what's best, not what people want. Today there is a great disrespect for the clergy and yet God instructs the church to give proper respect to those that watch for your souls. **Titus 3:1 - I Timothy 5:17-20 – Hebrews 13;7,17**

Third: disunity comes from a disregard to settle your differences God's way. We believe that God's method does not work for today's culture and so we have a general distain for following the principles and protocol that the Lord Jesus gave us. Then we wonder why there is strive in the church. **Matthew 18:15-17** is not suggestion it is a mandate. You should be obedient to it.

Fourth: disunity comes from a lack of love and kindness to your brethren. It is shameful that we behave in the house of God like we are strangers to each other because we have differences or we just don't like each other. Look with me at Paul instruction to the church of the Galatian in chapter 6--- And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith. We recently finished the book of John and what did we learn about love we are not to love as the world loves but as the Father loves us. --- I John 4:19-20

If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

Fifth: disunity comes from polluting the church with gossip...but I'll need another 40 minutes to deal with that...

Conclusion:

Paul considered it essential to teach the matter of unity. He knows that one of the great potential problems in the church is conflict between weak and strong Christians who can disrupt the unity of the church. God is displeased when we sow seeds of discord and yet God loves you so very much. He does not like and even hates certain sins but God desires you repent and used His special gifts to accelerate unity in His Church. He made you very special and He desires that you use your special gifts to bless others and encourage them. That's what pleases God not strive and envy. Has not God been good to you? So use the good that God gave you. Thank Him for who he is...