

May 27, 2018 -

Romans 15:4-7 -

“Disunity Stifles the Church” (pt. II)

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:

I had an appointment with my dentist this past Tuesday. Some of you know Dr. Mark Nevid he has been my dentist for many years. He’s a great guy and you know he is a Yankees fan...I was there for a schedule root canal. Most of you know about that procedure and how you just look forward to all that drilling. We’ll the last root canal I had was with a different dentist and it was not a good experience. So I noticed I was not relaxed during the procedure and decided to think on my sermon for Sunday to get my mind distracted. I actually got this introduction after Dr. Nevid took an x-ray during the procedure to be sure he got all of that decayed root. He later commented that if he didn’t get it all I would be back in a couple weeks with a worst problem. I got to thinking that truth is so important when we are dealing with the issues that cause disunity in our church. If we don’t get to the root of the problem we are going to have a worst problem later. I want to come back to this analogy later in the message as we examine five contributing factors that lead to disunity...

I. A Call for Unity (15:4-6) *continue to point*

4. 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. Our first concern as Christians should be to please Christ and our neighbor whenever it will promote spiritual growth. Too often we are not thinking at all about others and their spiritual growth.

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 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. Churches have disgrace the name of Christ and fail miserably in this practice...

Illustration:

A number of years ago the Holy Creek Baptist Church was split down the middle. 100 years of Christian fellowship, ended in a fit of discord and strive not to be rivaled in this century. The source of dissension was a piano bench which still sits behind the 1923 Steinburg to the left of the pulpit. There has been an unspoken agreement mediated by Pastor Deacon Fred of the Landover Baptist Church. Each faction will have its own separate service with its own separate pastor. Since the head pastor is not speaking to the associate pastor, each will have their own service, which will be attended by fractioned members. We are told that the services are far enough apart that neither group will come into contact with the other. An outside party will be moving the piano bench to different locations and appropriate positions, between services, so as to please both sides, and avoid any further conflict that could result in violence.

2. Harold Roberson used to say "The Lord cannot work in the midst of disunity. We need to have the right attitude if we are to minister effectively. The goal is to produce a sanctified group one that is "set apart" for the glory of God. 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. ...

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 in 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 sinful behavior should not be part and parcel in the church.
For where envying and strife *is*, there *is* confusion and every evil work. --- James 3;16

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 disdain for following the principles and protocol that the Lord Jesus gave us. Then we wonder why there is strife in the church. **Matthew 18:15-17** is not suggestion it is a mandate. You should be obedient to it. If we don't get to the root of the problem we are going to have a worst problem later. Settle it.

It is the rare Christian who doesn't get wounded in church at one time or other. The reason is obvious. Christians are people, too. We are all frail human beings and we can hurt someone else without meaning to. What I have learned about offenses is that people who love each other can hurt each other sometimes. There can be a misunderstanding, hurtful words, a jealous spirit, or a regrettable moment. For every hurt that happens there is a choice that follows, talk or be silent seek a resolution or give into pride. God loves you and he always gives us a second chance. There is a right way to deal with these problems, and it is through the power of love.

Fourth: disunity comes from a lack of love and kindness to your brethren. It is shameful that we would 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:

The power of love has seen us through problems before and the power of love will see us through again. Love leads to unity, not division. Love keeps everyone in mind, not just our self. Love respects and honors all people. While this world is breaking before our eyes and making promises it cannot keep, the entire Church in America needs to rise together in love in order to give this world the only thing we can give them that will last forever... the love of Jesus Christ.