

THE BOOK OF ROMANS

17. Living in Unity



Introduction

In our previous study we have seen that there were areas where the Christians in Paul's time disagreed. The Gentile Christians thought one way, but the Jewish Christians felt differently. The Apostle gives them guidelines so they will know what to do in those 'grey' areas. He concludes by pointing them to the example of Jesus Christ and praying that they will be united.

Scripture Reading: Romans 15:1-21

1. Unity between Jew and Gentile v1-7

- ☉ How can we maintain unity in our relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ according to verses 1 to 6?

(v1 – To bear with others and not please ourselves.

V2 – To do good to others and build them up.

V5 – To follow the example of Jesus.

V6 – To accept one another.)

- ☉ Why do you think Paul mentions 'endurance and encouragement' when he prays for unity? Discuss.

(When there is disunity and differences between us we really need encouragement to keep our hearts right and to hold on to the hope that God will work everything out for good. It often takes time for relationships to be resolved so we may need to 'endure' and hold on, continuing to love and accept our brothers and sisters despite what has happened.)

Paul prayed for unity between the Jewish and Gentile believers. Jesus prayed for unity too. Let this be our prayer, that there will be unity in our families and churches. Let's be those who seek to build up unity, not tear it down!

2. God's purpose for the Gentiles v8-13

- ☉ One of the themes of the book of Romans is God's plan of salvation for both Jew and Gentile. As we come to the end of the book, Paul speaks about this again. What were the promises that God made to the Patriarchs about the Gentiles? See v8, Genesis 12:3, Genesis 26:2, 4, 28:10, 14

(The Patriarchs were Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God promises each of them that through them the nations of the world would be blessed. The nations are the Gentiles.)

Paul then goes on to quote four more Old Testament scriptures in Romans 15:9-12 that tell of how God would bring salvation to the Gentiles. The Jewish believers needed reminding that God had included the Gentiles and they should accept them too.

- ☉ We often focus on our own race, but Jesus commanded all Christians to 'make disciples of all nations'. How can you personally obey Jesus' command?

3. Paul's call to the Gentiles v14-21

- ☉ What ministry had God called Paul to and what did this mean? Romans 15:16, 18, 20

(v16 – Paul was to minister to the Gentiles, by proclaiming the gospel to them.

V18 – He was to lead the Gentiles to obey Christ.

V20 – He was to preach the gospel where Christ was not known.)

- ☉ Paul was successful in his ministry. In what ways did he give glory to God for his success? Go through verses 15 to 19.

(v15 – Paul says that it was the grace that God had given him.

V16 – He wanted the Gentiles to be an offering to God.

V17 – He glories in Christ Jesus.

V18 – He only speaks of what Christ has accomplished.

V19 – He says that it was all through the power of the Spirit.)

- ☉ What ministry do you think God has called you to do? Are you beginning to fulfil this?

Reality Check

God wants us to be successful in ministry, but how do we respond when we are? Do we boast about what we have done or do we give glory to the Lord?

Conclusion

We have been called to glorify God. This is what it says in Romans 15:6, “so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” And again in verse 9 it says, “So that the Gentiles may glorify God”. We do this when we live in unity with one another and seek to build one another up. Let's close this study with the blessing that Paul gives in verse 11.

“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.”

