

ROMANS - #15

ANTIOCH BIBLE CLASS

LESSON TOPIC

LIVING TOGETHER IN CHRIST

MEMORY VERSE: ROM. 15:6 That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

INTRODUCTION

Paul is nearing the end of a long letter to the church at Rome. If you close your eyes and imagine the letter without chapters and verses, as it was first written, this will be even more apparent. We have a tendency to see each chapter as a unit within itself because of the chapter and verse divisions. He began with a treatise on the fact that both Jew and Gentile were sinners and in need of salvation. From that point he has written a letter that can virtually stand alone as a single document describing the Christian church and the redemption of its members through the grace of God. A recurring thought has been the relationship between Jew and Gentile. He felt it essential to emphasize the call of the entire Gentile world into the realm of God's people. It is not difficult to understand that the Jews saw themselves still as God's chosen ones. But Paul's message was that the real "Israel of God" was the church, made up of both Jew and Gentile. The essence of the predetermined plan of God was to include the entire posterity of Adam under one plan of redemption, and as he said in Eph. 2:15, "for to make of himself of twain one new man, so making peace". Bringing Jew and Gentile together in harmonious faith was perhaps one of the most difficult tasks of Paul's ministry. When we think of him as the apostle to the Gentiles, which he was, we should realize that there was much more to the mission than just preaching a message on Sunday morning. He was trying both to reconcile them to a relationship with God and, simultaneously, to a relationship with each other.

The Roman church had both a Jewish and a Gentile population, as many of the New Testament churches did. It is no wonder then that Paul directed so much of his letter to a church he had never visited, toward the mutual work of the gospel in both of them, striving with all of his power to draw them to the point where there were no cultural, ethnic or status barriers between them. He saw them, with all of the things that may divide them in the flesh, yet, "LIVING TOGETHER IN CHRIST", being one in their relationship with God. This was an accomplishment that could only be achieved through the grace of God in their lives.

Is that not the same message for us today, that, with all of the earthly things that could divide us, yet, by the grace of God, to bring us into a oneness with each other that is not superficial or pretentious, but instead is a marvelous demonstration of the power of God through "one Lord, one faith, and one

baptism, and so to create one universal body of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. And yet the Christian church is about as fractured and divided today as it could possibly be. The one thing that offers any common unity around which it could rally together is the Bible, but sadly, it is used to keep us apart. "LIVING TOGETHER IN CHRIST" is therefore more than a lofty title for this lesson, it is the paramount purpose of "Christ in us, the hope of glory". Let it be so!

DAILY SCRIPTURES AND COMMENTS

MONDAY. ROM. 15:1-7. ONE ANOTHER.

V1. We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

Look back to the first verse of chapter fourteen and you see almost the same directive. The call is for the strong to "bear the infirmities", the weaknesses and incapacities of those who are not matured in Christ Jesus. We are to do this before and beyond the desire to please ourselves. How noble and necessary.

V2. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification.

"Pleasing your neighbor" is not a justification of any area unlike Christ but is a call to help everyone on their Christian journey, even at the expense of your own sacrifice. The purpose is to edify one another in the faith and fellowship of Christ.

V3. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, the reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me, (Ps. 69:9).

The great hallmark of the life of Christ was total unselfishness and complete sacrifice to the will of God in him. He pleased not himself, but lived for the good and the edification of those who believe. As far as the Christian community is from reaching that mark, yet it is exactly what God calls us to. Instead of moving toward that lofty aim, we use the idea that we can all believe as we choose, just believe in Christ and all is well. What utter folly and disdain of the primacy of Christ and his salvation in us, to hold such an idea.

V4. For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

"Whatsoever things", in all of the Old Testament scriptures, are there for us to more clearly see the great plan God has in the redemption and oneness of Jew and Gentile. Old Testament types and shadows, examples and instructions, should lead us to believe that God had only one people, led by one law, worshiping at one altar, and prefiguring one eternal purpose for mankind. The Bible is a "unit", God's plan is singular, the work of redemption is a reconciling work, both to God and to those so reconciled, and there is one calling, one Lord, one faith, one body the church, with Christ as the one mind of that body. Just as he created the human body with many members, all joined together in one grand purpose, to give, aid and fulfill life, so also is the body of Christ.

V5. Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus.

O God, give us the desire and power to have the same mind which was in Christ Jesus, Ph. 2:3-5. That is, to be possessed with that same attitude toward the members of the body of Christ, as he was, by not pleasing himself but sacrificing his life for others. Is that our attitude and example?

V6. That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The method and the process is that we may use the oneness of mind and mouth and the purpose is that in this manner we may be able to glorify Christ. The context to that is that you cannot glorify Christ if you separate yourself from the church, the body of Christ, no more that the brain can guide your body if it is separated from your body. And people think they can be all God wants them to be and never darken the door of the church. Why would you even want to? What they need is the mind of Christ which would reconcile them to the "body".

V7. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.

We talk about how Christ has received us unto himself and his salvation and, moreover, we talk about "receiving Christ" for our salvation; but we have very little to say or do with the concept of "receiving one another". Therein is the proof of our receiving Christ and his gospel.

TUESDAY. ROM. 15:8-12. THE CALL OF THE GENTILES IN CHRIST.

V8. Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers.

The ministry of Jesus was directly to the Jewish nation. His ministry to them confirmed the promises made throughout the Old Testament concerning him.

V9. And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, for this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.

In addition, Christ was the means of the mercy of God to the Gentiles. "As it is written", is an oft quoted phrase, denoting the fact that what is being affirmed was first written in the Old Testament.

V10. And again he saith, rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people.

This is a quote from Deuteronomy, again, confirming that of ancient times it was the plan of God to include the Gentiles in his mercies.

V11. And again, praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles, and laud him all ye people.

This is a quote from Ps. 117:1, exhorting "all ye nations" to praise the Lord.

V12. And again, Esaias saith, there shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.

This is a quote from Is. 11:1, 10, making a specific reference to Christ, a root of Jesse, through the lineage of David, and that in him the Gentiles would trust. No doubt Paul had difficulty with the Jews convincing them that, indeed, God had included the Gentiles in his plan of salvation as the people of God.

WEDNESDAY. ROM. 15: 13-19. PAUL DECLARES HIS MINISTRY TO THE GENTILES.

V13. Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

Paul admonishes them to abound in joy and peace in believing, that is, because you are believers in him. And from this joy and peace generated through believing, your hope in God should be strong by the inner working of the Holy Ghost in you.

V14. And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

The practical use of Christian knowledge should fill us with goodness, making us able to admonish and edify one another.

V15. Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God.

Notwithstanding the fact that you are, of your own inspiration and knowledge, able to admonish each other of all areas of practical Christian living, I have myself written unto you very boldly, exhorting you to this same end.

V16. That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

The grace of God given to Paul was for him to be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. Of this fact he had written very clearly (boldly) to the church at Rome. The offering up of the Gentiles simply refers to their being made a part of God's kingdom. The "sanctifying of the Gentiles by the Holy Ghost" speaks of their acceptance into God's kingdom and that this was by the power of the Holy Ghost upon their lives. This is divine verification that God has accepted them.

V17. I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God.

Paul has reason to rejoice over the fact that God has called the Gentiles unto his salvation and that he has been a minister of this salvation to them.

V18. For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed.

I am only testifying to that which God has done as I have preached to the Gentiles.

V19. Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

If anyone's ministry was attended by "signs and wonders", it was surely that of the apostle Paul. And don't forget to include in those signs and wonders, the miraculous deliverance he experienced from so many disastrous things which he confronted.

THURSDAY. ROM. 15:20-24. A MINISTRY IN NO MAN'S LAND.

V20. Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation.

I have been a pioneer for the spread of the gospel of Christ, blazing a trail where ever God led me, and not following in the footsteps of others.

V21. But as it is written, to whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.

Paul carried his message of salvation to people who had not heard it before.

V22. For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you.

It was because of his many duties of preaching the gospel in places where God opened doors for him that had kept him from going to Rome earlier to preach to them.

V23. But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you. V24. When so ever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company.

I have finished the work God gave me to do in this area and can now fulfill my long desire to come to you. I plan to go to Spain to preach the gospel there and while I am on my way there, I will come by to see you at Rome. I would like to stop by Rome on my way to Spain and be filled with fellowship in your company.

FRIDAY. ROM. 25-33. A GIFT FOR THE SAINTS AT JERUSALEM.

V25. But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. V26. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.

Before I can come to see you at Rome, I must first go to Jerusalem. I have a contribution which was provided by churches in the areas of Macedonia and Achaia for the poor saints there.

V27. It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are, for if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.

Through the lineage of the Jewish nation and also those Jews, including Paul himself, by which the Gentile world has received the message of the gospel, Gentiles have received a rich blessing from the Jews in Christ. It is fair, therefore, that the Jewish saints in the area of Jerusalem, being poor as a result of famines, should be blessed with help in a natural manner as with this contribution.

V28. When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.

As soon as I can make a safe delivery of this contribution to the saints at Jerusalem, I plan to begin my journey to see you on my way to Spain.

V29. And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

My full intent and expectation when I come to see you is that I will find you anxious for the message of the gospel for your Christian growth and I look forward to that ministry and fellowship.

V30. Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; V31. That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints.

I have two prayer requests for you at Rome: (1) That you would pray that I could be delivered from them who do not believe in Jerusalem; (While he was certainly kept from the intent by those who did not believe in Jerusalem, yet they did alter his plans to go immediately to Rome. He was apprehended and spent two years in detention in Cesarea where he appealed to Ceasar and was ultimately sent to Rome, under guard). (2) That I may be able to deliver the contribution I have for the poor saints in Jerusalem and that they will receive it.

V32. That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed.

These requests being granted they will expedite my journey to you and we can be refreshed in Christ together.

V33. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

This essentially ends his letter of great instructions and exhortations to the church at Rome. The next chapter will contain greetings to certain acquaintances of his which now were residing in Rome.

SUMMARY

Paul finishes his exhortations to practical Christian living and thereby instructions as to how they should treat those among them who are immature believers. He emphasizes again how that he has been the apostle to the Gentiles and shows how the Old Testament scriptures proclaimed the inclusion of them into the common wealth of God. Then he lays out his desire and plans to come to visit them who are at Rome. He will do this on his way to Spain. Apparently he never got to Spain, since he was martyred at Rome.

Thus concludes the main body of his letter to the saints at Rome, even though there is yet another chapter which will deal with personal acquaintances. It is a long letter, compared to the standards of others which he wrote. It has covered some great themes, including: the sinfulness of both Jew and Gentile; the total submission and transformation of life to become like Christ; the combining of Jew and Gentile into one body of Christ, thus comprising the true "Israel of God", and finally he covered some lengthy exhortations on practical Christian living.

It is a monumental work, covering so much that is relative to the Christian life and the body of Christ. If I were making a choice of personally favorite portions of this letter, I would choose the 6th, the 8th and the 12th chapters. I cannot so choose, however, since the entire book is the word of God and very important to our Christian experience and life. At any given time, it may be that some little hidden word within the letter might just be the exhortation we need for that moment. So is the nature of all the word of God.

QUESTIONS

1. Why had Paul never been to Rome?
2. What 4 Old Testament sources did Paul quote, enforcing the call of the Gentiles?
3. Why was he going to Jerusalem before he visited Rome?
4. Why did Paul strive to carry the gospel where no other man had preached?