

“United to One Another in Love Regardless!”
Romans 15:5 – 13

Introduction:

The Spirit of the Lord spoke to my heart about the message last week and this week as we prepare ourselves to vote for President and Congress on the national and state level. As we prepare our hearts to cast a ballot for people in our national, state, and local election, it is so important that we all remember a simple truth: We who have come to know Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord live our lives as “strangers here” in Peter’s words, people who seek to be good citizens of the United States, while we are primarily citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven!

We studied a foundational truth last week, one that we would do well to have in our thinking this morning. Our Lord Jesus Christ told Pontius Pilate, just before He went to the Cross to die for our sins and be raised again.

John 18:36 is what Jesus said: *“My kingdom is not of this world. If it was my servants would fight to prevent my arrest. But now my kingdom is from another place.”* **His Kingdom is utterly Counter-Culture.** It creates in us the exact opposite of what this world system values in the lives of people, their sinful and self-centered thinking and actions. When we wake up on Wednesday morning after the election is over, God the Father will still be on His throne of grace and Jesus Christ will still be the Lord over everything for His Church!

The Lord desires for us all to be people who reject the values that are espoused by the people of this world system of things. **The Lord calls us to Speak the Truth in love, to Build Up one another in Love as we live together here at Cedar Grove in Scriptural, healthy, and Christ-honoring interpersonal relationships.** At a foundational level, what that means is that we will not permit our political points of view to cloud our judgment or refuse to love one another deeply with pure, self-emptying, other-oriented love.

This morning, as we look at this Scripture text Paul wrote to the church in Rome, we’ll seek to see and understand Paul’s teaching on Jesus-honoring relational unity! This amazing text speaks to each one of us concerning what the Scriptures have to say about how well we are presently **Treating Each Other**; how well we are getting along with each other as a church family, and we see things differently in the political arena.

As we look at Paul’s words to the Roman church, there are two things as the basis from which as God’s people we should be working; **First**: This is the **Church** of Jesus Christ, which is His physical presence in this world and over which He is the Head. Each of us has been combined together as members and we are gifted by His Spirit to do the function or **Ministry** He has designed for us. Paul wrote to the Ephesian Christians, Ephesians 4:16: *“From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work.”* Ephesians 4:25b *“For we are all members of one body.”*

The basis of this church family being able to honor and glorify Jesus together is clearly stated in those two great verses of Scripture. **If we want the church to be built up in holy love and want her to become all Christ has purposed for her to become, we each must perform the work or ministry He calls us to do, or it will not happen!**

The second thing; it is God's will that this Church family works together to build up the body of Christ here in our area, so choosing to walk together in unity and love, are gifts that must be given to one another in the church so that Jesus Christ is **Seen** through our actions and is **Honored** among us.

If that is true, and it is, then it must of necessity be the will of our enemy, the devil, that the gifts of grace and love, building others up in love, not be flowing through the lives of God's children in the church **so that the Name and the reputation of Jesus will be Soiled and Defamed by how we divide against each other in our church.**

Our enemy is a tactician with 2000 years of practice with his weaponry to mar the image of Jesus in the church, specifically in our relationships with each other. His invisible liars and tempters will use personality clashes, differences of opinions, family squabbles, emotional hurts, or memories from our past. Anything at all, will do as something to use to hamper God's people by giving these things to each other. **So, disagreeing with one another politically will serve just fine to tear this church family apart!**

When this happens, people who don't walk with God look on at us and scratch their heads in bewilderment. Their conclusion sounds something like this: "They say they are the Church of Jesus but in the way that they treat each other, they don't look much like what I heard that Jesus is like from my Sunday School days as a kid."

Since we know this tactical strategy, are aware of it and Satan's schemes, let's live in the advice of Paul in the book of Ephesians, chapter 6. Let's "*be strong in the Lord and in the power of His mighty strength. Take unto yourself the whole armor of God that you might be able to stand against the devil's schemes.*" Let's take our authority in Christ to be "*more than conquerors through Him who loved us and gave Himself up for us.*"

As we study this call to love each other deeply and stay united to one another it is as important to us as it would have been to the Christians in the city of Rome in the first century. Paul wrote to the Roman Christians to seek to stay welded together in Jesus. In the church we are commanded to stay "**United To One Another.**" Listen to the Words of Scripture as we read them:

Ephesians 4:3 "*Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.*"

Philippians 1:27 "*Whatever happens conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel. Then I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel.*"

In this text, Paul gives us a tremendous teaching on being united together in love. The issue of unity in the church is so important, so that the church of Jesus not be fragmented, splintering off

into factions, and causing pain through words and actions that tear the body apart. **Where the following three things prevail in a church, you have unity of the Spirit.**

Romans 15:5, 6 “*May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

- 1.) People who have unity through “one **Mindset** to follow Jesus...”
- 2.) People who have unity through “one **Heart** to glorify Jesus...”
- 3.) People who have unity through the mutual **Acceptance** that Jesus gave to us.

Paul gives us some wonderful words of teaching that we must understand and be willing to flesh out if we’re going to follow Jesus in true unity as a church: The word rendered “**United**” (NIV) is rendered better in the NASB “*be of the same mind with one another*” from the Greek are the words “*to auto phronein*” – be of the same attitude or mentality with one another.” The word rendered “with one **Heart**” (NIV) is very closely akin to the Greek work “*homothumadon*” – of one passionate heartbeat of purpose to glorify the Father God.

Paul’s words are pinpoint in accuracy and vital to our being the church of Jesus in our world today. We are to have unity comprised of the same mentality and the same heartbeat or passion – get it please – “*as you follow Christ Jesus*”, the Head of the church.

Please understand there is one outstanding lesson from church history: Satan’s primary strategy involves **Destroying Unity among Christians**. He is the author of confusion, anger, insensitivity, divisions, and church splits. Today we are going to see truths of the Word of God, which we can use as spiritual weapons to tear down the enemy’s strongholds and strategies.

I. One Mindset as You Follow Jesus

Verse 5 “*May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus.*”

Paul is interested that **unity in the body of Christ at Rome** flow through each individual member’s life to the lives of others because **they are of the same mentality, mindset or attitude – followers of Jesus.** Jesus was very clear on how we were to live and the absolute necessity of our unity to one another in His ministry.

Turn to John 17, the section of Scripture known as the High Priestly Prayer of Jesus for the church, and let’s look at the things that were so important to Jesus that He prayed about them for us just before He died to take away our sins. Jesus prays about four major elements that are inseparable from the great gospel message of Christianity –

- 1.) **Salvation** by faith by in what He has done (verses 1 – 3)
- 2.) The fact that He the Son of God **became a human** to do God’s work of salvation (verses 4 – 6)
- 3.) That in Christ we may be **Sanctified**, that is made clean and holy, and set apart to work for God (verses 17 – 19)

4.) The fact that for us, once was raised to life, He would be the glorified, unconquerable King, who would create a kingdom that would last forever (verse 24)!

But the central theme that runs throughout this entire prayer is His major request of His Father that His disciples, those of His day, and we who are alive today, might experience **Unity** and **Oneness of heart** as we follow Him in life.

Having the same mentality of attitude does not mean we all have the same opinions on every issue or that we have no strong debate, unity of attitude or mentality. It means that we choose the will and the ways of Jesus above our own ways and will not allow opinions or debates to destroy unity of the body. The Jesus Christ who unites is greater than the human issues that divide. Verse 11b *“Holy Father, protect them by the power of your great name – the name you gave me – so that they may be one as we are one.”*

In verses 20 – 23 Jesus amplifies and intensifies His prayer for each of us here at Cedar Grove in 2020: *“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”*

Jesus’ primary concern for His church leaps out of that paragraph of His prayer: visible unity, a oneness that enables the church to Testify to a lost world that Christ is real. He can take divergent and quite different people, change their hearts, give them similar mindsets and attitudes, and make them one! Unity of attitude and mentality testifies to the ability of Christ to change men and women.

Twice, Jesus prayed for unity, “to let the world know you sent me” as a primary witness to people who do not yet know Him that Jesus is really living in His Church and His ability to **Change our Human Agendas. The world is, historically, a place of strife and conflict; hatred and war are the norms, not the exception.** When non-Christians see a people, who are quite different people living together with true unity and oneness of attitude to follow Jesus, their hearts cry out to experience that!

That is why it is Satan’s strategy throughout church history to destroy the unity of the church by sowing seeds of **Discord** in the body. It just makes sense. Satan heard Jesus pray this prayer that **Unity is a primary Witness to non-believers that Jesus is living in the midst of us.** If he can destroy that powerful means of demonstrating Jesus’ life-changing power, he has blurred or maybe even obliterated people being saved. People have been pointing to strife, division, and splintering in the church as their reason for abandoning the Gospel of Christ for centuries.

It was no accident that when Jesus prayed for our unity He went on to pray verse 15 “My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.” Jesus knew in advance that Satan’s tactic would be to destroy unity in the body of Christ so He prayed for God to protect oneness of attitude to do His will first and foremost, not our own!

II. One Heart as You Glorify Jesus

Verse 6 “so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The second truth, Paul wants us see and understand, is unity with one another flourishes as we fan into flame the same passions in our hearts, to glorify Jesus together as a church. The way most of us think of giving glory to Christ Jesus is with our mouths singing His praises, praying His praises together aloud, honoring Him privately in worship, or giving testimony or words of witness to His greatness as we speak to one another.

We can and should give glory to Christ with our mouths. That does tend to unify us to one another when we are all doing that. But Paul also uses this precious Greek word “homothumadon” – being of one **Singular Heartbeat or One in strong Passion with one another.**

There is nothing that brings people who follow Jesus in life closer together than when He puts Similar passion or Purpose in our hearts that He wants us to accomplish with Him.

When His people receive a vision that creates passion and collectively, we decide to do it and go for it, the Lord rejoices and the devil cringes!

Having the same heartbeat and passion of purpose does not mean that we all do the same function or ministry. It also doesn't mean that we have unanimity in our decisions we make. It does mean we are all aiming at the same thing and doing our part to get to the goals and purposes Christ has designed for this body when He called us into being in 1835. Jesus is glorified through a group of people who have a singular passion and have united together to accomplish it. Now the question is what is it that should be our fundamental purpose or passion as a church here in Juniata County that we can accomplish together for His glory?

Answer – **Making Jesus Christ known, revealed, revered, and honored to one another, this community, and the world in everything we do.** In everything we do from programs, ministries, worship gatherings, and sports events, to decisions about our future, making Jesus' presence with us, our singular passion “homothumadon.” Let Christ be glorified in us!

The early church, as described in Acts chapters 1 through 12, is characterized eight times by this word of one heart. In everything from worship and praise to problem solving, in Acts 6 over food distribution, and Acts 15 over whether or not Gentiles had to be circumcised. **The church had one heart – one singular passion – to make Christ known, revealed, and revered.** The result was that even in their problem solving, people got saved. Priests and Levites got saved when they witnessed the church glorify Jesus in their problem solving!

What is different about the church in Acts, men and women who chose to follow Jesus in life, and what we should be experiencing today? My response to that question is, honestly, there should be nothing different about the church of Jesus today, if we decide to unite around the single passion they did of making Jesus known, revealed, and revered! We'll be enjoying having similar heart desires and the use us to see thousands of people born into His family!

III. United Through Acceptance

Verse 7 “*Accept one another then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.*”

The third thing Paul wanted his readers and us to understand is that true unity flourishes and Jesus Christ is honored in His church body when we give to one another the precious gift of **Mutual Acceptance**. As believers in Christ Jesus we are told **to give each other the worth and to value one another. We give this gift of Esteem through Acceptance**. We choose to receive our brother or sister in Christ, our fellow member of God’s family just as they are.

The Greek word is “paralambanesthe” and it means, “be ones who are constantly receiving one another kindly, be ones who are constantly admitting one another to your society of friends, be ones who constantly receive each other hospitably.” Including one another, warmly receiving each other, is to be modeled after Jesus who embraced all people, the highly educated intellectuals and unlearned fisherman, vile prostitutes and tax collectors, and you and me.

Jesus embraces people just as they are and accepts them with kindness. He allows them time to learn of His love and He does the transforming of their lives from within according to His highest will for them. Paul says that’s the model we are to follow. “*Accept one another just as Christ accepted you.*” God was honored and praised, and He still is today when we give acceptance to one another in the church.

Acceptance does not mean we embrace the sin in a person’s life. It means we embrace them and give them worth and dignity. Jesus will use our lives and our teaching one another to do the inner transformation by His Spirit. We accept in love. Christ Jesus transforms His followers from the heart and He uses us as instruments to do so.

On the subject of change, if I’m working in your life to change you to my way of thinking or to live the way I want you to live your life, I’m manipulating you and haven’t really embraced you as Christ embraced me. But if I’m working and praying for you to be being transformed toward more Christ-like living, I’m an instrument of God and have accepted you, believing in your highest good in Christ!

CONCLUSION

Christ Jesus has knit us together into one body as members of one another. Paul teaches us in this paragraph of Scriptures that there are three truths about unity in that body: One mentality to follow Jesus, one strong desire to glorify Jesus, and the acceptance of one another modeled on the acceptance of Jesus.

Jesus prayed that this kind of unity would be a Primary Witness to the world that He is the Lord who is alive in the midst of His people and that He changes the lives of His followers by changing our hearts. Here in Romans 12:9 and following, Paul says the result of unity in the body of Christ will be that unbelievers (Gentiles) will magnify the Lord God!

So, can we give one another these three minimum guarantees and stay one in purpose to follow Jesus, one heart desire to glorify Jesus, and accept each other as brothers and sisters? **Can we be people who put aside the donkey or elephant thinking first and be people who look at the Lamb first?** We are called to be sheep in the Lamb's war on earth for the souls of people!

October 18, 2020

“United to One Another – Regardless!”

Romans 15:5 – 13

Introduction:

As we prepare for casting our ballots on Election Day 2020, we do so as people who are called to be “strangers here,” citizens of another kingdom!

John 18:36, Jesus told Pilate “My kingdom is not of this world.” Jesus came to establish a kingdom that is absolutely **C** _____ **-C** _____!

We are called to be His kingdom people, who **S** _____ the truth and **B** _____ **-U** _____ one another in love! The text Paul wrote to the church in Rome is a call to look at how well we are **T** _____ one another!

As Paul writes about the Church there are two things that serve as a basis for the Spirit’s working among us: First, this is the church of Jesus and He has combined us together to do His work of **M** _____ Ephesians 4:16, 25

Second, as we walk together in loving unity, we do so that Christ may be **S** _____ and **H** _____ by those who do not yet know Him!

The evil one works to bring hurt and heartache to and through the church, to **S** _____ and **D** _____ the holy Name of Jesus! The enemy seeks to mar the Name of Jesus through relational pain in churches.

Since we know this tactical strategy, let’s live in Paul’s counsel to the believers in Ephesians 6.

Paul calls the believers to stay “welded together” in Jesus. In the Church of Jesus, we are commanded to stay **U** _____ **T** _____ one another. Ephesians 4:3 and Philippians 1:27

Where the three things in Romans 15:5, 6 prevail in the church there is unity: One **M** _____ to follow Jesus; one **H** _____ to glorify Jesus; the mutual **A** _____ Jesus gave to us!

The word “united” in the Greek language ... and the word “heart” ...

Let’s be aware of Satan’s strategy: It is to **D** _____ **U** _____ among Christians. He is the author of hurt, confusion, anger, and church splits.

I. One Mindset as You Follow Jesus: Romans 15:5

The unity of every church is based in being like-minded as Jesus’ followers!

In Jesus' great High Priestly Prayer recorded in John 17, there are four great themes Jesus addressed as He prayed.

The central thing Jesus prayed for us, was that we would experience U_____ and have O_____ of H_____ ... John 17:11 and 20 – 23
Ephesians 4:15 and 4:25

Jesus' primary concern for unity was to demonstrate to a lost world Jesus is alive and living in the midst of His gathered people. Twice Jesus prayed for unity to T_____ to the world that Jesus is alive, unity as a P_____
W_____!

That is why Satan's strategy for two thousand years is to sow D_____ in local churches and between churches in a region. Satan knows what Jesus prayed!

II. One Heart and Mouth to Glorify Jesus: Romans 15:6

Paul also wants us to understand unity flourishes when we fan into flame similar passions in our hearts. He uses the amazing Greek word – homothumadon. "Being of one singular heartbeat, thus one P_____ to glorify Jesus

There is nothing that brings a church to unity like what we experience when we have similar passion, common P_____. The question is what was Jesus thinking when He called Cedar Grove to be His Church in 1835? The answer ...

The Church in the early chapters of the book of Acts is characterized by this word 8 times ... and the Church today?

III. United Through Acceptance: Romans 15:7

The Church at Cedar Grove must see and understand the truth unity flourishes among us when we give each other the gift of M_____ A_____. Give one another the gift of E_____!

The Greek word is paralambanesthe – "receive one another with kindness, admit others hospitably to your society of friends."

We are called to look at how Jesus treated people and put into practice what we see in Him. Paul writes "Accept each other hospitably as Christ Jesus A_____ Y_____!"

We are called to love and accept people, so Jesus has a safe place to work to transform their hearts and lives!

Conclusion

Discussion Starter Questions for Home Groups

1. What are some of the ways you have personally experienced the Spirit of God warning you about seeds of division and discord in your life and relationships?
2. What are some positive fruit we experience in our Church family life together when we choose to speak the truth and build up one another in love?
3. Why do we need the Spirit of God to enable us to stay united, welded together as a local church? And among churches in a region or area?
4. What are some reasons you can think of regarding why Jesus prayed such a powerful prayer for Christian unity, for His people to have common passion?
5. Do you think we as followers of Jesus today truly understand the truth that our unity and similar passions and desires to glorify Jesus testify, serve as a primary witness to people who live in worldly values?
6. What does Luke want us to see and understand with his use the Greek word *homothumadon* eight times in twelve chapters in his description of the heart and singular passions of the people in the early church?
7. How do you personally work at accepting others warmly and hospitably so they can be in a safe place or environment as they grow in their walk with God?
8. Read together aloud John 17:1 - 17 and discuss insights you have regarding the key things Jesus prayed for His Church, as He prepared to go to the Cross.
9. Read together aloud Ephesians 3:14 through 4:16 and discuss insights you have regarding being united together with our brothers and sisters in Christ.
10. How have you been challenged, or perhaps corrected by the Holy Spirit, as you seek to walk out being united together with your brothers and sisters in Christ? How can we work together, as a body, to grow and warm and loving acceptance?