

Title: Christian Liberty: Accept One Another

Text: Romans 15:7–13

"I hated the thought of the marginalized sitting alone at lunch with no friends and no one to share life with."

Do you know who said this?

Angela Veltman/Green

This is one of the many reasons I love her.

And she carries the spirit of the passage that we are studying this morning.

Romans 15:7 ESV

7 Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

Main Idea: Accept Others the Way Christ Has Accepted You!

How has Christ accepted you? Well, not because you are cool, or cute, or smart. And especially not because you are morally good. Because you are not. Nor am I, lest you think I am acting judgmental and superior.

You and I bring nothing to the table to persuade God to accept us. His acceptance of you and me, if we are in Christ, is for one reason and one reason only - and it is not, according to this passage, His love for you. His one reason to accept you is for His GLORY!

What is the Glory of God?

*The glory of God must mean His unchanging essence. Giving glory to God is ascribing to Him His full recognition. **The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament 1391. δόξα doxa***

Think about this. If the creator God is willing to not only develop a plan of rescue for his people, but to actually execute the plan at great cost to Him personally through the shed blood of Jesus on the Cross, this act deserves a standing ovation for all eternity. This act glorifies God in the most profound of ways. If we deserved rescue, that would be simply giving us our due.

But we were unrighteous, wicked, hateful, enemies of God and He STILL saved us!

What? Why would he do that? Certainly, because he is a God of love. The Scriptures are replete with this truth. But more importantly because He gets great glory out of this.

So, why is Paul tell those in Rome this? Because, if God accepts the sinful Jew and God accepts the sinful gentile through his amazing grace in Christ, then Christians had better be sure to accept one another for the Glory of God.

Think about it. Is there any reason why we should get along? Why are we even here this morning? Because of Jesus! He unites a bunch of unlikely people. He, through the power of His Holy Spirit, pulls us together. If it were not for our common love for Christ, you might not give me the time of day. And I might not ever want to have a relationship with you. But because God

changes our hearts and removes the heart of stone and gives us a heart of flesh (in other words a tender heart towards the things of God), because of this we can truly love one another.

*If the perfect, sinless Son of God was willing to bring sinners into God's family, how much more should forgiven believers be willing to warmly embrace and accept each other in spite of their disagreements over issues of conscience (Matt. 10:24; 11:29; Eph. 4:32–5:2). **The MacArthur Study Bible Chapter 15***

Okay, that was all the introduction!

Now, I want you to see from the text How this kind of God-glorifying acceptance is not only possible but expected.

Again, the main idea of this sermon is to *accept others the way Christ has accepted you!*

There are three powerful truths that we must understand in How we can obtain this kind of Accepting, hope-filled culture at ABC.

And it starts with intentional, purposeful unity!

1. The Pathway to Unity is Through Sacrificial Service (vs. 8-9)

Romans 15:8–9 ESV

⁸ For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, ⁹ and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name."

It is interesting to me that Paul mentions Christ becoming a servant for a purpose - the purpose, according to the text, was to show the truthfulness of God.

Now, before we delve into what that means, I just want you to think about God's process of how. His process was through the servitude of Jesus, the Son of God, first to the Jews.

God could have descended on the Nation of Israel in just anger and wrath for being the stiff-necked people they were. But isn't it interesting the path God took through Jesus Christ?

Jesus came as Gospel hope for this nation. How? By offering up his life as a ransom for many.

Remember Paul's words in...

Romans 1:16 ESV

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Isn't this astonishing? The nation of Israel constantly through her existence rebelled from their God and longed to pursue and serve other Gods. They misunderstood the Scriptures and used them to fuel their pride and superiority when they should have been humbled by God's gracious choice making them His chosen nation. He should have scrapped the whole lot of them, but what was His gracious response to their interminable rebellion?

Mercy - Withholding just punishment.

Grace - Giving what is not deserved.

Redemption - Rescue from deserved punishment.

God provided all this and much more when Jesus came to this planet. He came to rescue His people from their sin. He had been prophesied about for generations, and yet when that came, they, on mass, missed his profound arrival and ministry.

Listen to his words of deep sorrow regarding His eternity and their sad reality...

Matthew 23:37 LSB

³⁷ "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you did not want it."

Even so, Christ still pursued them by serving them with His very life's blood.

Look at verse 8 again...

Romans 15:8 NLT

⁸ Remember that Christ came as a servant to the Jews to show that God is true to the promises he made to their ancestors.

Christ served them, not simply because He is a God of love, but because He is true to His Word.

Here is the point! If God says it, it will happen.

He made promises to the Patriarchs, and those promises came to fruition in Christ, the Messiah!

2 Corinthians 1:20 ESV

²⁰ For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.

But here is the most astonishing and beautiful part of this passage for us!

Look at verse 9...

Romans 15:9 NLT

⁹ He also came so that the Gentiles might give glory to God for his mercies to them. That is what the psalmist meant when he wrote: "For this, I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing praises to your name."

Isn't this amazing! You and I, gentiles, have always been a part of God's redemptive plan.

The Jews in Jesus time hated this idea. Gentiles had no claim nor right to their God.

Except for one pesky detail - God's word in the Old Testament promised it!

2 Samuel 22:50 ESV

⁵⁰ *“For this I will praise you, O LORD, among the nations, and sing praises to your name.*

Psalm 18:49 ESV

⁴⁹ *For this I will praise you, O LORD, among the nations, and sing to your name.*

Two Old Testament passages prove Paul’s premise that the salvation of Gentiles is God’s plan that brings Him great glory!

(Tell them to give God the glory for their salvation by saying - “Praise God!”)

You are a gentile, and if you are in Christ, it has nothing to do with you, and it has all to do with God.

Titus 3:4–6 ESV

⁴ *But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,*

Remember what Jonathan Edwards said?

“You contribute nothing to your salvation except the sin that made it necessary.” — Jonathan Edwards

Therefore, just as we have been welcomed into the family of God through Christ, so, we must welcome one another. This is a beautiful recipe for unity within the body.

And as verses 8-9 point out so well, one way we can effectively accomplish this is by serving one another sacrificially.

What is your mindset? Is it how can I serve or how can I be served?

What was the mindset of the Lord?

Matthew 20:28 ESV

²⁸ *even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

“We are never more like Jesus than when we are serving Him or others. There is no higher calling than to be a servant.” - Nancy Leigh DeMoss

Do you want a unified body? Find someone within this body and serve them with no expectation in return.

Review - Accept Others the Way Christ Has Accepted You!

- The Pathway to Unity is Through Sacrificial Service

2. God’s Timeless Design is Unity in Christ (vs. 15:10-12)

Romans 15:10–12 ESV

¹⁰ And again it is said, “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.” ¹¹ And again, “Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him.” ¹² And again Isaiah says, “The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope.”

Paul, in verses 8-9, made this point, but in case we missed it, he quotes three more passages from the Old Testament demonstrating God’s heart for the Gentiles. For you!

By the way, repetition is a sign of importance.

Don’t ever forget Jesus’ poignant words to Nicodemus that dark night so many years ago when He said...

John 3:16–17 ESV

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

What’s the point of Jesus’ words to this Pharisee so long ago? That salvation was not simply for the Jews, but God’s plan of redemption extended to the entire globe. It reaches every people group on this planet!

God’s plan is to unify all people under the beautiful banner of Jesus Christ.

Galatians 3:28 ESV

²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

The cross of Christ is the great leveler of humanity. Great and small, intelligent, and those who are not so bright, thin, or thick, tall or short, black or white must all enter through the humble gate in order to be saved from eternal death in Hell.

All the way back in Deuteronomy, Moses declares that the Gentiles will rise with the Jews.

Deuteronomy 32:43 NASB95

⁴³ “Rejoice, O nations, with His people; For He will avenge the blood of His servants, And will render vengeance on His adversaries, And will atone for His land and His people.”

Psalms 117:1 ESV

¹ Praise the LORD, all nations! Extol him, all peoples!

And perhaps the most powerful of these verses is the prediction that the Messiah would one day rule over the Gentiles. Folks, again this has profound implications for those of us sitting here today who name Christ as our Savior.

Isaiah 11:10 CSB

¹⁰ On that day the root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples. The nations will look to him for guidance, and his resting place will be glorious.

and interestingly, Paul quotes the Apostle Matthew. This is New Testament!

Matthew 12:21 ESV

²¹ and in his name the Gentiles will hope."

Okay friends. what point do you think Paul is making by using these various passages from the Old and New Testaments?

SALVATION WAS NOT JUST FOR THE JEWS, IT WAS FOR THE GENTILES AS WELL.

Remember? "For God so love the WORLD."

The Unified church of Jews and Gentiles has always been God's plan.

A unified church is a powerful apologetic and compelling reason that the Bride of Christ can only be from God.

Do you understand and appreciate what God has done through His grace to His called-out ones? Do you understand what a miracle the church of Jesus Christ is?

Can you fathom what an amazing feat it is to keep the church of Jesus Christ from imploding or exploding? There is no good reason that the church of Christ should hold together. We have varied backgrounds, diverse ideologies about innumerable subjects, different senses of humor, and different things we are passionate about; we are all at differing stages of our spiritual maturing. Some are brand new believers in Christ who know very little about the depth of doctrinal issues, and there are those here who are deeply in love and understand well church history or the Doctrines of Grace or can articulate well the nuances of the supralapsarian controversy, and its implications on soteriology.

We have Calvinists, Arminians, Molinists, and multiple variations of these theological positions.

We have some who were born and bred Baptists, others who have a Reformed background, Christian Reformed background, Roman Catholic background, Wesleyan background, and so on...

We are black, white, Asian, and a great deal of other ethnicities, and with those ethnicities come various cultural backgrounds. We are Boomers, [Gen X](#), Gen Y, Gen Z, and Gen A. And between these generational categories is a great deal of misunderstanding and gross mischaracterizations.

I'm sure there are more distinctions that I could mention, but all of these distinctions are under this one roof, and do you know what this is a recipe for?

Major, ongoing, divisive explosions and disharmony.

What keeps us together? Our amazing conductor, Jesus Christ!

Imagine a symphony orchestra, each musician expertly playing a different instrument. A flute cannot mimic the deep tones of a cello, nor can a drum replace the delicate notes of a harp. Yet,

when each musician plays their part under the guidance of a single conductor, what emerges is harmonious music that no single instrument could produce alone.

So it is with the church. We are each "instruments" in the orchestra of God's Kingdom. We may have different "sounds"—different backgrounds, theological understandings, or generational viewpoints—but under the leadership of Christ, our "Conductor," we produce a harmony of divine love that reaches out to the world.

"As Augustine wisely pointed out, 'In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.'

Just like in a symphony, let's celebrate our unique roles while staying harmonized under our one true Conductor, Jesus Christ. In doing so, we become a compelling melody of God's love and grace, a living testament to the power of unity in diversity."

Allow me to give you a powerful tool for the promotion of unity within the body of Christ. Keep in mind, the passage I am about to read was written for a church in turmoil and disunity. Paul's solution for this is, very simply, LOVE!

1 Corinthians 13:1–8 ESV

¹ If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³ If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. ⁴ Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant ⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶ it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸ Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away.

If we truly love one another, we will plug our name in these verses and live accordingly. This will inevitably produce a sweet harmony within His Body of believers.

Review - Accept Others the Way Christ Has Accepted You!

- The Pathway to Unity is Through Sacrificial Service
- God's Timeless Design is Unity in Christ

3. Spirit-Fueled Unity Cultivates Abounding Hope (vs. 15:13)

Romans 15:13 ESV

¹³ May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

I believe Paul has made some powerful and biblical arguments that salvation belongs not only to the Jews, but the Gentiles. What is the result of this kind of understanding? How should this affect the life of the church? What are the tangible results of this truth?

HOPE!

What is hope? Hope is a confident expectation.

This isn't simply a temporal hope that deals with the here and now, this is an eschatological hope. In other words, a hope that deals with the future.

If you notice, Paul's words are a benediction of sorts. A prayerful desire for not simply unity in the body, but that the God who saves both Jews and Gentiles and sovereignly places them within the church, would be FILLED with ALL JOY!

Joy - *In the Bible, joy is a deep-rooted, inspired happiness that stems from a relationship with God. The Hebrew word often translated as "joy" is "Simcha," and in the New Testament, the Greek term is "Chara."*

God-Centered: Unlike fleeting happiness, biblical joy is focused on God and His goodness ([Psalm 16:11](#)).

Biblical joy is an enduring sense of contentment and well-being that originates from a deep relationship with God and is not dependent on external circumstances.

Peace - *In the Bible, the concept of peace is rich and multi-dimensional, often encapsulated by the Hebrew word "Shalom" in the Old Testament and the Greek word "Eirene" in the New Testament. Biblical peace is not just the absence of conflict; it represents a comprehensive well-being, harmony, and contentment.*

Divine Origin: True peace comes from God

1. The Hebrew concept of "Shalom" conveys completeness, soundness, and well-being for individuals and communities ([Jeremiah 29:11](#)).
2. Reconciliation: In the New Testament, peace often refers to the reconciliation between God and humankind through Jesus Christ ([Romans 5:1](#)).
3. Inner Serenity: Biblical peace also involves inner calmness and confidence in God's sovereign care ([Philippians 4:7](#)).

In believing - Believing in what? The gospel of Jesus Christ, of course!

People run after money, power, control, food, drink, drugs, you name it, to bring them JOY and PEACE.

Listen to me carefully this morning. There is no amount of money, no degree of power or control, and no substance on this planet; there is nothing or no one that can deliver authentic joy and peace other than the PRINCE of PEACE - Jesus Christ ([Isaiah 9:7](#)).

And this joy and peace only comes through the gospel!

What is the gospel? Explain...

You must believe the gospel to be saved. When you are saved you will experience a joy and peace that can only be generated from the Holy Spirit who transforms our hearts and gives us new life!

Romans 14:17 ESV

¹⁷ For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

And what is the result of believing? That you would ABOUND in hope!

I really like the word ABOUND.

ABOUND - *“To be in excess, exceed in number or measure. In the NT, to be or have more than enough.”* Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

Isn't that a beautiful word?

God doesn't just give His children HOPE. That would be gracious enough. But he gives EXCESSIVE HOPE! He gives MORE THAN ENOUGH HOPE!

Negativity, grouching, and murmuring causes dissension and division. Those actions actually drive hope away because they cause us to focus on the trials and tribulations of this life. They cause believers to be overwhelmed with the sin curse that plagues us all.

But Holy Spirit-fueled unity with one another causes abounding hope because our focus is on creating a little heaven here on earth.

That's what church is supposed to be - a little heaven on earth.

It is a place of unparalleled unity amongst great diversity.

It is a glimpse of the hope we will enjoy for all eternity.

I mean, what do you think heaven will be like?

“Be quiet; that room is where the Baptists are. They think they are the only ones here.”

Where is your hope?

Is your hope in your job, where security seems guaranteed by a paycheck and upward mobility? But what happens when layoffs come or the industry changes?

Is your hope in your girlfriend, boyfriend, husband, or wife, where love and companionship promise to fulfill you? Yet what occurs when misunderstandings happen or when the dynamics of the relationship shift?

Is your hope in your retirement, looking forward to a life of leisure and freedom? What if economic downturns impact your savings, or health issues limit your activities?

Is your hope in your vacations and toys, believing that pleasure and enjoyment will give your life meaning? But how do you feel when the vacation ends, or the newness of the "toys" wears off?

Or is your hope in something more lasting, something unshakeable?

In a world of uncertainty, the Bible speaks of a hope that doesn't disappoint, rooted in the steadfast character of God and His promises. This hope offers not just momentary happiness but eternal joy; not just physical wellness, but complete wholeness; not just earthly gain, but heavenly treasure.

You see, the Bible encourages us to cultivate this kind of hope. How?

Hebrews 10:24–25 ESV

²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

This is the point of the church! That is why we gather regularly. First and foremost, to worship our great God. But secondly, that we would love one another well.

The day is coming. For those of us in Christ, it will be a glorious day.

For those not in Christ, it will be a day of great dread.

But we can and should get started on that day right now by doing what Paul has been instructing us to do for the last two chapters.

Review - Accept Others the Way Christ Has Accepted You!

- The Pathway to Unity is Through Sacrificial Service
- God's Timeless Design is Unity in Christ
- Spirit-Fueled Unity Cultivates Abounding Hope

Conclusion

I leave you with the challenging words of Timothy Keller, which propel us to accept one another the way we have been accepted by Jesus.

"The Christian Gospel is that I am so flawed that Jesus had to die for me, yet I am so loved and valued that Jesus was glad to die for me. This leads to deep humility and deep confidence at the same time. It undermines both swaggering and sniveling. I cannot feel superior to anyone, and yet I have nothing to prove to anyone. I do not think more of myself or less of myself. Instead, I think of myself less."

And when we think of ourselves less, it makes room for us to think of others more. And if you remember, that is the second greatest command of God. *"Love your neighbor as much as you love yourself."*

Connection Group Reflection Questions

1. For "The Pathway to Unity is Through Acceptance ([Romans 15:8-9](#))"

Question: Can you recall a time when someone's acceptance had a significant impact on you or your community? How can you replicate that experience for someone else this week?

2. For "God's Timeless Design: Unity in Christ ([Romans 15:10-12](#))"

Question: What are some practical steps you can take to better align with God's plan for unity within the church and your own circles?

3. For "Spirit-Fueled Unity Cultivates Abiding Hope ([Romans 15:13](#))"

Question: How has relying on the Holy Spirit changed or reinforced your perspectives on unity and hope?

4. General Question

Question: In what ways can you apply the principle of 'receiving others as Christ has received you' in your daily interactions with family, friends, and even strangers?

1. Who are you praying for daily?
2. Who are you engaging with weekly?
3. Who are you sharing the gospel with monthly?