

## **The Benefits Of Unity**

### **Romans 15:8-13**

#### **Introduction**

In chapter 15 we are exposed to Paul's promptings and prayers and plans and pleas to the Roman readers. Paul prays that God would grant the Roman believers endurance in trial in trials and encouragement in faith and unity in fellowship (vv.5-7). The Lord Jesus Christ has come not to gratify or satisfy himself but others (v.3). Jesus has come to grant salvation to both Jews and Gentiles (vv.8-12). The Lord will keep His promise to both Jews (v.8) and Gentiles (vv.9-12). Paul adds one more thing to his prayer list for the Romans; abundant joy and peace and hope (v.13).

In Paul's dream church the strong support the weak (vv.1-3); everyone studies and obeys the Bible (v.4); everyone works hard at harmony and unity (vv.5-6); everyone accepts his or her brother or sister; and everyone has hope (vv.7;13). In Paul's world selflessness and the Savior serve as a source of hope. Scripture is the source of hope and God is the God of hope (v.13).

Since chapter 14:3 Paul has told the believers in Rome to receive one another "as Christ also received us to the glory of God" (15:7). The principle of receiving one another—not rejecting one another—accepting one another—is based on what Christ has done for us to the glory of God. The principle is not based on our performance or our worthiness but rather on the person and work of our great and gracious Lord Jesus. Now Paul will show the promises of God prove the principle to both Jew and Gentile.

The benefits of unity; harmony, hope, power and peace.

#### **The Principle Of Unity Confirmed By Jesus Christ (v.8)**

*Romans 15:8–13 (NKJV)8Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers,*

Paul speaks 'for the truth of God'-the truth held in love but held at all costs.

Truth doesn't hurt—unless it ought to—the truth of God. Os Guinness wrote; "Christianity is not true because it works. It works because it is true." Nothing can ever completely destroy truth. And what is the truth of God? It cannot be less than Christ or the gospel.

Paul rejects the notion that Christianity and Judaism are different forms of the same faith. He saw this before his conversion. That's why he persecuted the church. Yes Christians and Jews worship the same God, study the same Scripture—but that's where the similarities end. The cross of Jesus Christ is the forever division between the two systems—Judaism is a religion with a torn curtain, torn in two by the cross of Calvary and the resurrection of Jesus. Christianity is not some knew cloth cleverly sewn back in the old veil. Paul reminds the reader that the ministry of Christ is to the lost sheep of Israel and the other sheep (the Gentiles). Jesus was a minister to 'the circumcision' (the Jews).

The ministry of Jesus includes Jews and Gentiles. If God's heart is big enough to include both our heart must be big enough to include both. Jewish people were well aware that God made repeated "promises. . .to the fathers". Those promises were confirmed in Jesus Christ.

#### **The Principle Of Unity Centered In Giving Glory To God (v.9)**

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*9and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written: “For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, And sing to Your name.”*

While the Jews were honored by Christ’s coming, they by no means held a monopoly on the ministry of Jesus Christ. God had a plan for the Gentiles as well. Paul reveals that Jesus came in part that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy! There are numerous passages in the Old Testament that God made promises to the Gentiles. God did not enter into any formal contracts with the Gentiles. True. God’s dealings with the Gentiles are an expression of His love and mercy. The point—God has received both Jew and Gentile without distinction—and the ministry of Jesus Christ is the proof.

Paul offers three texts to prove that the Gentiles are accepted by God; in the past and in the present and in the future. Paul quotes three Scriptures; Psalm 18:49; Deuteronomy 32:43; Psalm 117:1. Later Paul quotes from Isaiah—thus appealing to the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms—Paul draws from all three great divisions of the Hebrew Bible.

The Gentiles are accepted; not because of Paul’s opinion or his mature love; but rather because the Bible says so. Some things cannot be rejected because of pride or prejudice. Paul knows that some Jews might be tempted to think—“God doesn’t really accept the Gentiles; or if God does accept the Gentiles—he doesn’t accept the Gentiles the same way he accepts the Jews!”

The weaker brother may because of pride or prejudice wish to reject what God has accepted. But we cannot abandon the promises and principles of the Scriptures. We must accept what the Scriptures require us to accept. We must condemn what the Scriptures require us to condemn.

We cannot abandon the Scriptures integrity based on the fear or failure of some who believe the demands of Scripture are too high.

Think about why Paul is making such a strong argument. Some people must have been annoyed or perhaps even offended that God would accept Gentiles. But Paul quotes Psalm 18:49; “Therefore I will give thanks to You, O Lord, among the Gentiles, And sing praises to Your name”. David anticipates a day when the Messiah will sing praise to God in the middle of a vast multitude of Gentile believers!

### **The Principle Of Unity Allows The Gentiles To Praise God (vv.10-12)**

*10And again he says: “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!”*

Now Paul quotes Deuteronomy 32:43. Why in the world are the Gentiles rejoicing? Because they have entered into the blessings of salvation! They are rejoicing with “His people”!

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*11 And again: "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!"*

Paul now quotes Psalm 117:1; "Oh, praise the Lord, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!"

The Psalm continues; "For His merciful kindness is great toward us, And the truth of the Lord endures forever.

The Psalmist as Israel invites the Gentiles to praise the Lord in the Millennial Kingdom; the earthly reign of King Jesus. In order for that to happen Gentiles must be present in Christ's reign.

*12 And again, Isaiah says: "There shall be a root of Jesse; And He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, In Him the Gentiles shall hope."*

Paul offers Isaiah's testimony (11:1;10) as well: the root of Jesse—will rise to reign over the Gentiles. Surely this is a reluctant reign—if there are Gentiles—they only reluctantly accept the Messiah (the critic replies). Not so—Isaiah says "In Him the Gentiles shall hope".

What does Isaiah mean? We know that Jesse was the father of David. Jesse is David's root. But who is Jesse's root? Why David's Son—who proceeds Jesse—how is that possible? Because Jesus is Jesse's Creator! Jesus is Jesse's creator! Didn't Jesus spring from Jesse? Yes—in His humanity! Both are true. In Revelation 22:16 Jesus self identifies as the Root and Offspring of David. Jesus the Messiah! In His Deity—Jesse's Creator—In His Humanity—Jesse's descendant! He shall rise to reign over the Gentiles!

Paul says Isaiah predicted it. The Gentiles are not some afterthought or divine concession or strange turn of events. The Gentiles also need hope!

The Gentiles can and will accept God's Messiah! The Gentiles can have hope!

Wiersbe points out the progression in the promises that Paul quotes in Romans 9-12 (see TBEC Vol. 1; p.563).

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| * | The Jews glorify God <i>among the Gentiles</i>       | <i>Psalm 18:49</i>  |
| * | The Gentiles rejoice <i>with the Jews</i>            | <i>Deut. 32:43</i>  |
| * | All the Jews and Gentiles <i>together praise God</i> | <i>Psalm 117:1</i>  |
| * | Christ shall reign over Jews and Gentiles            | <i>Isaiah 11:10</i> |

Paul quotes Isaiah 11:10. At one time the Gentiles were without God and hope.

Ephesians 2:11-13; "Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—(12) that at that

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time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. (13) But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been made near by the blood of Christ.”

We not only have hope—but joy and peace and power!

### **The Principle Of Unity Brings Joy And Peace And Power (v.13)**

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

Paul’s powerful prayer is also a benediction of hope! Jesus is the source of hope. God’s Word communicates hope. The power of the Holy Spirit energizes hope! God is the author of our hope. Paul is praying. Joy and peace are not disconnected—but rather connected—to believing!

If your life is marked by a profound absence of joy and peace perhaps its time to consider Christ!

Father—the God of Hope—joy and peace—the fullness of hope—joy and peace—the fruit of hope!

Samuel Johnson wrote; “Hope is itself a species of happiness, and perhaps, the chief happiness which the world affords.”

The joy Paul prays for is a deep seated gladness, an inner pleasure and peace. This is the depth of assurance that comes from having a right relationship with God through Christ! Do you remember in John 17:13 (NLT) Jesus said, “And now I am coming to you. I have told them many things while I was with them so they would be filled with my joy”.

Joy and peace come from believing in Jesus Christ.

God is the God of hope and the Holy Spirit provides the power to continue in hope.

People who abound in hope and power and joy and peace have little time for divisions, and quarrels over non-essentials.

## **Conclusion**

We often categorize problems this way; things that God can help with; and things that God can’t really help with. We live in a culture and society that believes that profound problems, long-term problems; mental and emotional problems require a skill set outside the normal competencies of the average Bible believing Christian.

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Can Jesus bring hope to the abuser and the abused? Can Jesus bring hope to criminals and victims? Can Jesus bring hope to those who have been traumatized by sin; cauterized by guilt; stigmatized by addictions? Can Jesus bring hope to people who have been paralyzed by fear?

Fear is strong. Fear can cause paralysis. Fear is powerful. Fear can cause you to quit a job or a marriage. Fear can isolate and alienate. But is there something more powerful and more potent than fear? The answer is yes—the answer is love; 1 John 4:18; “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears, has not been made perfect in love.”

As anyone begged you to hold on to hope—only to have your hopes dashed? Do you hold hope at arm’s length? Are you afraid? Are you afraid of more pain or more disappointment? Than you are a good candidate for Biblical hope.

Hope doesn’t fail.

The young need hope. The elderly need hope. “You can’t teach an old dog new tricks.” That might be true of dogs—but you are no dog—you were created by God and reflect His image. Have you tried and failed?

Hope doesn’t fail. We may hope in things that do fail. But that is only because our hope is misplaced, or misguided. God is faithful. His promises never fail.

Is it possible to be angry and resentful and bitter and confused and worried and hopeful?

Not really.

“I’ve tried everything.” Really? “Yes. I prayed. It didn’t help.” I’m glad you prayed. What did you pray? Did you pray that God would reveal your sin—did you pray for the strength to abandon your sin and trust Christ? Have you learned to live and trust Christ in all the changes in life? Maturity in Christ brings hope.

Depressed people need hope.

Suicidal people need hope.

People who have suffered life-shattering experiences need hope.

Those without Christ need hope.

Leon Joseph Suenens

“I am a man of hope, not for human reasons, nor from any natural optimism, but because I believe the Holy Spirit is at work in the Church and in the world even when His name remains unheard.”