
Praying for Hope

Romans 15:7-13

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Introduction *Being filled with the Holy Spirit is being filled with hope-producing joy and peace that come from God and overflow in praise!* To be sure, a mark of a person filled with the Spirit is that he glad-heartedly obeys the revealed will of God. To be sure, a mark of a person filled with the Spirit is that she glad-heartedly gives energy, time and money to help other believers in their faith. To be sure, a mark of a person filled with the Spirit is that he is made strong to witness to God's grace in the face of opposition. To be sure, a mark of a person filled with the Spirit is that both he and she are impelled by a hope-producing joy and peace to excel in *worship, discipleship and evangelism*. Therefore, it is my observation that in order for Clearcreek Chapel to grow in holiness and numbers we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. In order for us to witness a surge in cogent worship, careful discipleship and courageous evangelism we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. What does that look like and how does that happen are the concerns for tonight's message titled PRAYING FOR HOPE.

To recap last week and introduce the text for this week notice Paul's flow of thought in 14:1-15:13.

Christian liberty: Paul warns Christians, in disputed areas like diet and special days, to avoid judging others who behave differently since Christ is Lord and judge of us all (14:1-12).

Christian love: Then, Paul exhorts Christians to show love by avoiding practices that may tempt others to sin and to promote peace and growth by seeking to please others (14:13-15:6). This is what we focused upon last week. We were exhorted to live together in unity imitating the example of Christ. The example of Christ underscored two spiritual values which must be pursued. They were 1) serving others and 2) denying self. We concluded with the accent on prayer by noticing that when we believe that through Bible reading and prayer He gives us all we need in order to give to others all He commands, He gets the glory and we get the grace!

Christian Acceptance: Tonight we will finish Paul's thought that started back in 14:1 by looking at Christian acceptance as seen in vv.7-13. Here we see the apostle Paul encouraging all Christians to accept one another in unity. How does accepting one another in unity relate to praying for hope?

The Requirements for mutual acceptance

v.7

Paul starts off in v.7 by exhorting believers to accept one another as Christ accepted them. Here we come across three requirements / aspects of mutual acceptance.

Each of us

The implied subject of this sentence is a plural you. In effect, he says, “you all must welcome / accept one another”. This tells us that each of us is required to uphold this command. He has shifted his focus off of “the strong” and now is addressing a general audience. Everyone in the local church is to promote mutual acceptance. There are no exceptions. We all are required to welcome one another.

As Christ accepted us

The next aspect or requirement of this mutual acceptance is seen in the phrase “as Christ has welcomed you”. Paul describes what this mutual acceptance is. How Christ has welcomed His people is the way we are to accept each other. This acceptance is not based on race. It is not grounded in social status. We do not come together in unity because we all enjoy soccer or make a six figure income or delight in the opera or partake in rodeos. Christ welcomed us based upon faith in Him alone. He is the common ground of unity. Diversity unified only occurs truly when all distinctions of color and sex and economics and birth order are unimportant. What matters is faith in Jesus Christ our Lord. When that is important diversity is unified. Mutual acceptance is made possible.

To the glory of God

So far we’ve noticed the command to mutually accept each other applies to each of us, looks like how Jesus accepts us and now we see that it is to the glory of God. Loving one another, giving preference to one another, serving one another, admonishing one another, comforting one another; mutual acceptance of each other to help each other believe God’s Word is ultimately about the glory of God. When v7 is a reality in a local church, God is magnified. When v.7 is functioning, we recognize that it is not about us. It is all about Him. He becomes, in other words, the main attraction when v7 is an actuality.

The Reasons for mutual acceptance

Vv.8-12

Having looked at the requirements of mutual acceptance, Paul shifts now in vv.8-12 to the reasons for mutual acceptance. What enables this type of mutual acceptance? Why does the theme of Jew / Gentile jointly praising God come up now? How can global diversity be unified? This passage is loaded with grand, glorious and global theology. We will only scratch the surface.

Paul’s movement of thought is striking and sweeping. From 14:1 up to 15:8 he has been talking about how to live with each other in a close and loving way within a local church. Now he switches from the local expression of mutual acceptance to the global expression of

mutual acceptance. How and why we are to live in harmony with each other is the focus of vv.8-12.

(How) In the purposes of Christ's coming

vv.8-9

The first reason how mutual acceptance is achieved is seen in the purposes of Christ's coming; vv.8-9. Christ came "as a servant to the circumcised". That is, Christ was incarnated as a Jew. He grew up as a Jew. He was "sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (cf. Matt.15:24). This "serving the circumcised" meant a humbling life on the earth and a humiliating death on the cross (cf. Mk.10:45; Phil.2:5-11). This was to exhibit two things.

To exhibit God's faithfulness to his promises

v.8

As we read on we notice an odd statement. "...to show God's truthfulness in order to confirm the promises to the patriarchs". Christ came to faithfully fulfill the patriarchal promises we've been listening to in our morning services. Genesis 12, 15, 17 and other passages talk about God's covenant with Abraham. We see that Christ came to "confirm" or realize all the promises given to the patriarchs. The oath-certified promises are God's promises. And without Christ's coming and crucifixion, God's promises would be unfulfilled. But God's faithfulness cannot fail! Christ's coming was to prove that God is truthful and faithful in keeping, for example, the promise made to Abraham (cf. Matt.26:54).

To exhibit God's mercy to his peoples

v.9

The second reason or purpose for Christ's coming as noted in v.9 is that the nations might glorify God for his mercy. Christ came not only to exhibit God's faithfulness to his promises to the patriarchs but to exhibit God's mercy to his peoples.

It's remarkable when one goes back to say Gen.12:3 or Gen.17:4-5 how these two purposes are really one purpose. The patriarchal promises were not restricted to ethnic Israel. God promised to make Abraham the father of *a multitude of nations*. The term "nations" does not refer to geo-political nations. It refers to people groups. It points to what we see in Rev.5:9 which says, "... by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation". The Lord has created a mosaic of peoples with different languages, religions and cultures and the Church has the blessing of bringing the Good News to all of them.

The way Abraham becomes the father of many nations is to see individuals come to faith through the proclamation of the Gospel in every tribe and language and people group. When Paul read the patriarchal promises he heard the Great Commission. This is why if you read the rest of chapter 15 you will see Paul's robust ambition. "Go and make disciples among all the nations". As this happens, diversity is unified on a global scale by the power and truth of the gospel. A diversified group of people begin performing by the power of the Holy Spirit v7. They welcome one another to the glory of God. And this glory fills the earth as the waters cover the sea (cf. Hab.2:14)

(Why) In the praises of Christ's people**v.10-12**

Christ's coming exhibiting God's truthfulness and mercy is bringing about not just local expressions of unity in diversity (for example, here at Clearcreek Chapel). We see the sweeping plan of God through Christ. He is unifying diversity by penetrating 6.35 billion people in this world. Verse 7 is to be witnessed among the 16,000 People Groups around the world. The gospel is creating a new people who preserve the unity of the faith through sound doctrine and acts of sacrificial love.

Paul stacks text upon text to prove that God has always had but one plan. Paul supports the thesis that Christ came to unify diversity not merely in Israel or Rome or Springboro. He came to unify diversity globally. Due to the reality of these Old Testament texts, 2 1/2 billion people who have never heard of Jesus Christ will eventually have a biblical local church functioning like 15:1-7 as a witness of the glory and grace of God.

There is much to notice in vv.10-12. I simply desire to direct your attention to a premise. Listen to repetition and think about the theme God is highlighting. (read O.T. texts).

- Praise, sing (v.9)
- Rejoice (v.10)
- Praise, extol (v.11)
- Hope (v.12)

In this rhythm of joy we see why Christ came. He came to die on the cross to purchase people from every language and tongue and nation to function like v.7. Creating local expressions of love for the Lord and His people cannot and will not be contained. It spreads like wild fire and covers the entire world. A world-wide celebration of the grace and glory of Jesus Christ is in view here. People diverse in language and color and sex and economics and politics and culture are being filled *with hope-producing joy and peace that come from God and overflow in praise.*

The reason for mutual acceptance of verse 7 is seen in why Jesus came. He came to (re)create a people unified around the object of joy; namely himself.

The Resources for mutual acceptance**v.13**

This wide-angle lens on God's overarching purpose brings us to v.13. God created billions of people. He then unifies some of them out of every tribe and tongue and nation by sending the gospel of Jesus Christ through missionaries and causing his people to believe what they hear. From this belief in the truth they assemble together in smaller groups called local churches. They obey the command to welcome each other. This promotes strong faith and joy that expresses itself in worship, discipleship and evangelism.

This summary is correct but incomplete. The fire of praising and singing to (v.9) and rejoicing over (v.10) and extolling (v.11) and hoping in (v.12) the King of the Universe needs fuel. The blaze of praise can go out. The one anothering of v.7 needs power. Verse 13 tells us about the resources for mutual acceptance. (read v.13)

Through believing

This indirect prayer of verse 13 mingles an invocation with an exhortation. Paul is asking God to do something and he is urging the church to do something. He is reminding the Church that God fills us with the Holy Spirit *through believing* the Truth (cf Gal.3:5). Paul is exhorting the Church to maintain and increase its belief in the truth; the gospel of Jesus Christ. Whether it is a church in Rome or Springboro; whether it is a local assembly in Albania or Afghanistan Paul tells God's people that God fills them with hope-producing joy and peace *as we trust in Him*. If the level of joy and peace is low the problem is not hardships. It is a crisis of faith! Paul is exhorting the church to trust in Him who is the God of hope.

By filling

V.13 is also a prayer. He is asking the Lord to fill his people with a hope-producing joy and peace. And this filling is said to be the Holy Spirit who produces an overflow of praise. Joy and peace giving rise to worship and discipleship and evangelism come from God. And He gives this hope-producing joy and peace through a particular means; namely faith.

Conclusion To land this message I will give us a review of where we've been and a preview of where we might be.

Review

We are to live with each other in loving ways.

Loving ways are defined throughout Paul's thought of 14:1-15:7. We are to, in other words, welcome one another as Christ has welcomed us.

These loving ways are to edify each other's faith.

Welcoming each other as defined in vv.1-6 is a building up of each other. And the object of edification is faith.

This strengthened faith is expressed in hope-producing joy and peace.

Joy and peace over Jesus Christ is the response our hearts are to have when we think upon Jesus

This hope-producing joy and peace is a miracle and goes public through worship, discipleship and evangelism to the ends of the earth.

These are the results of the filling of the Holy Spirit. As we trust in particular promises in an obeying way God fills us with the power of the Holy Spirit. This miracle leaves behind a hope-producing joy and peace. This empowered joy cannot keep quiet. Nor can it keep to itself. This type of joy is sociable. It loves to worship. It loves to help others

grow in Christ. It loves to share Christ with an unbeliever. It longs to see the gospel penetrate all people groups around the world. A world-wide celebration is in its view!

Preview

With that as a review of the message, how does it apply to us? Let me give us a preview of what might happen as a result of believing this message in an obeying way.

As your pastor for outreach, I long for each of us to pray for hope. And that this hope will impel the church in two areas; reaching out to our neighbors within our communities and reaching out to each other within our church.

Could it be that God is up to something good amongst us and changing us:

- That we will stop believing that low joy is due to bad days.
- That we will start believing the Bible in its entirety.
- That we will grow in praying for His filling.
- That God will be pleased to produce a hope-filled joy and peace in each of us.
- That our joy will be outgoing.
- That God will be pleased to fill not just us but the new building with people who are filled with Him.

Join your Elders in **praying for hope** and dreaming and working and trusting for this type of future!