

Introduction

It was the spring of 1976 and Karen and I were students at Texas Christian University. I was a very young believer and, in the summer of 1975, I had begun attending the weekly Campus Crusade for Christ meetings on campus. They planned a beach crusade in Daytona Beach over the spring break week, which we participated in. I could not take the bus with the rest of the group because I was on the golf team and the tournament that I was playing in would not finish in time to catch the tour bus. So, Karen and I drove to Daytona Beach in my red Chevy Vega. Karen and I had received training in how to share the gospel, and in particular, how to use the Four Spiritual Laws tract that Campus Crusade used. However, in our first trip to the beach I was not very confident in sharing the gospel; I had never shared with anyone before. We prayed for the Lord to direct our steps and to help us. We saw a young couple sitting down with an umbrella, and we asked them if we could share some things with them. After presenting the gospel plan to them, we asked them if they would like to receive Christ. They said they would, and we led them in a prayer to receive Christ. The young couple attended all the Campus Crusade meetings over the next few days. In Matthew 28:20, Jesus gave the Great Commission, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” As Karen and I went out in obedience to the Great Commission, there was no doubt that Jesus had been there with us.

(Matt 28:18-20) “And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. {19} Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, {20} teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

All through the Scriptures God promises to be with us. In Genesis 26, He told Jacob, “Do not fear, for I am with you.” He spoke through the prophet, Isaiah, saying, “Do not fear, for I am with you.” He spoke through Jeremiah, saying, “They will fight against you, but they will not overcome you, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the Lord.”

(Gen 26:24) “The LORD appeared to him the same night and said, “I am the God of your father Abraham; do not fear, for I am with you. I will bless you, and multiply your descendants, for the sake of My servant Abraham.”

(Is 41:10) “Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.”

(Jer 1:19) “They will fight against you, but they will not overcome you, for I am with you to deliver you,” declares the LORD.”

God spoke through the prophet, Haggai, and told the people to work, “for I am with you.” When God tells us to work or preach the gospel, He has promised to be with us.

(Hag 2:4) “But now take courage, Zerubbabel,” declares the LORD, “take courage also, Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and all you people of the land take courage,” declares the LORD, “and work; for I am with you,” declares the LORD of hosts.”

In Psalm 127, Solomon wrote, “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it.” God has commanded us to preach the gospel, make disciples, and build the house of God, and it is God that is building it. We are God’s workers, working alongside of God.

(Ps 127:1) “Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the LORD guards the city, the watchman keeps awake in vain.”

Our passage today begins with the word, “Now.” It refers to all that we have been covering in Romans 14 and 15 the past few weeks. God has given us some things to do in order to create a unified church that glorifies God. Paul prays for God to do His part in unifying the church. God is with us and working with us to build His church. Then, Paul pleads with the church to do their part, and accept one another. Finally, Paul ends with a prayer for God to fill them with all joy and peace in believing. It is a wonderful picture of God and the church working together to build up and bring unity to the church so that God is glorified.

Edification of the Body – Part 4: Paul’s Prayers and Pleas for Unity

1. Prayer to be of the same mind with one another (Rom 15:5-6)
2. Plea to accept one another (Rom 15:7-12)
3. Prayer for joy and peace (Rom 15:13)

(Rom 15:5-13) “Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, {6} so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. {7} Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God. {8} For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises *given* to the fathers, {9} and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy; as it is written, “THEREFORE I WILL GIVE PRAISE TO YOU AMONG THE GENTILES, AND I WILL SING TO YOUR NAME.” {10} Again he says, “REJOICE, O GENTILES, WITH HIS PEOPLE.” {11} And again, “PRAISE THE LORD ALL YOU GENTILES, AND LET ALL THE PEOPLES PRAISE HIM.” {12} Again Isaiah says, “THERE SHALL COME THE ROOT OF JESSE, AND HE WHO ARISES TO RULE OVER THE GENTILES, IN HIM SHALL THE GENTILES HOPE.” {13} Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

1. Prayer to be of the same mind with one another (Rom 15:5-6)

Paul begins with a big three-letter word, “Now.” Paul has been exhorting the church in Rome to accept the opinions of one another. The strong or mature are not to judge the weak, and the weak are not to treat the strong with contempt. They are all to accept one another. Then, Paul exhorted them not to tear down, destroy, or offend one another. Instead, we are to pursue peace, and to build up one another. Paul’s third exhortation was for them to please one another for their own good and edification. He encouraged them not to just please themselves, but to bear the weaknesses of others, and to follow the example of Christ. Paul’s emphasis has been on the responsibilities of the church in pursuing unity and edification. NOW that he has finished exhorting the church to do these things, he now prays for God to do His part.

(Rom 15:5) “**Now** may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus,”

In Paul's first prayer, he begins with praise, then gives his request, and ends with the motive behind the prayer. He prays to the God who gives perseverance and encouragement. It appears that there are several different issues in the church that they are dealing with. First, there seems to be a rift between the Jewish believers and the Gentile believers. Second, there appears to be some struggles between the strong or mature, and the young and weak believers. The saints in Rome may need some perseverance and encouragement as they work through these things, so Paul addresses God as the one that gives both perseverance and encouragement.

Very few things wear people out more than conflict. When there is conflict, there is no peace, and there is no joy. Research has shown that strife even affects our immune system. One of the leading causes of pastors leaving the ministry is strife in the church. Lifeway Research stated that "26% left because of strife in the church."¹ According to Church Plants, strife in a church is the number one reason people leave a church.² It is not the only reason; they give the top twelve reasons. Paul has given the church in Rome some positive steps to resolve the conflicts and strife, and now he is praying to God, who gives the much-needed perseverance and encouragement.

The Greek word for perseverance is *hupomone* (Strong's G5281), which means to remain under. God is the One that can give us the strength, grace, and patience to remain under the difficult situation that we are facing. Paul is praying to the One that gives that strength, grace, and patience to endure the stress while things get resolved.

The second part of Paul's first prayer is the petition. Paul prays that God would "grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus." When the early church was having a major issue with the Judaizers, who wanted to subject the Gentiles and everyone else to the Law, Paul and Barnabas met with the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. After there had been much debate, they finally became of one mind and issued a decision. Sometimes, it takes a lot of debate to become of one mind. With that decision, they had a way to move forward to end all of the strife related to that particular issue. When we speak about becoming one mind, it means to agree in thought about the particular matter. It does not mean that everyone now had the same favorite color or favorite food; it simply means that they came to an agreement about the issue(s), which in the case of Acts 15, that we are saved by faith and are not under the Law. Believers do not have to be circumcised or observe all the other Laws in order to be saved.

(Rom 15:5) "Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus,"

(Acts 15:6-25) "The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter. {7} After there had been much debate... {25} it seemed good to us, having become of one mind..."

In addition to doctrinal issues, which were very divisive, there were social prejudices that had prevailed for centuries. The Jews considered the Gentiles as unclean, and often referred to them as dogs. For example, when Jesus went to Tyre, He had an encounter with a Gentile woman, who asked Jesus to cast a demon out of her daughter. Jesus told her, "Let the children be satisfied first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." The woman replied, "Yes, Lord, but even the dogs under the table feed on the children's crumbs." Because of her answer and faith, the demon was cast out of her daughter.

¹ <https://research.lifeway.com/2021/05/13/are-more-pastors-quitting-today/>

² <https://churchplants.com/articles/15586-12-reasons-people-leave-church-chuck-lawless.html>

(Mark 7:24-30) “Jesus got up and went away from there to the region of Tyre... {26} Now the woman was a Gentile, of the Syrophoenician race. And she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter. {27} And He was saying to her, "Let the children be satisfied first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." {28} But she answered and said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord, *but* even the dogs under the table feed on the children's crumbs.’”

When Peter was in Joppa, the Lord gave him a vision about eating unclean meat. The Lord repeated the vision three times. Then, Cornelius’ delegation arrived, asking him to go to Caesarea. Because of the vision, Peter went. Notice what Peter said to them, “You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean.” These social prejudices were divisive and hurtful. Now, God is telling these two groups of people to be of one mind and be unified. This was a very tall task to tear down these divisive walls. People need to do their part, but for this to happen, God would have to intervene and heal these rifts.

(Acts 10:28) “And he said to them, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and *yet* God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean.”

The third part of Paul’s first prayer is the purpose or motive behind the prayer. He prayed that they would become of the same mind so that with one accord they could with one voice glorify the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. God is not pleased, nor is He honored by our strife. God wants the church to be unified and with one voice to glorify Him.

(Rom 15:6) “so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.” Many years ago, a guitarist on the worship team arrived for the worship team practice before the service, and I could tell by his countenance that something was wrong. He and his wife had a fight that morning, and it was not resolved. I told him to go home and get reconciled with his wife, and then come back to the service. God wants us to be in one accord and glorify Him with our sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving.

(Matt 5:23-24) “Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, {24} leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.”

The church in Corinth was having a lot of strife, and they were even taking their brothers to court to get things resolved. Paul told them that they had already been defeated. Their witness to the world had already been tarnished. God was not being glorified and honored. The church was losing the fight; they were being defeated. God was not being glorified or honored by their division and strife. Paul prayed for the church in Rome that God would grant them to be of one mind and in one accord with one voice glorify God.

(1 Cor 6:1-7) “Does any one of you, when he has a case against his neighbor, dare to go to law before the unrighteous and not before the saints?... {5} I say *this* to your shame. *Is it so, that* there is not among you one wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren... {7} Actually, then, it is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another...”

2. Plea to accept one another (Rom 15:7-12)

In the midst of Paul’s two prayers, he again pleads with the church in Rome to accept one another. He exhorted them, saying, therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.” He has just petitioned God to do His part, and now he turns back to the church, asking them to do their part. You and I are to accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us.

(Rom 15:7) “Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.”

Paul clarifies the acceptance he is speaking about in the next couple of verses. “Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers.” Christ not only accepted the circumcised Jews, He also accepted the Gentiles, who were uncircumcised. In verse nine, Paul added, “and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy; as it is written, ‘Therefore I will give praise to you among the Gentiles, and I will sing to your name.’” Since Christ accepted both Jews and Gentiles, the church needs to accept both Jews and Gentiles. Christ served both groups, and both groups are to glorify God for His mercy. The Jews were to give praise to God among the Gentiles and sing to His name. Paul’s prayer was that they would be of the same mind and with one voice glorify God. Now, he instructs both groups to accept one another, so that they can jointly give praise and sing to God’s name.

(Rom 15:8-9) “For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises *given* to the fathers, {9} and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy; as it is written, “THEREFORE I WILL GIVE PRAISE TO YOU AMONG THE GENTILES, AND I WILL SING TO YOUR NAME.”

Paul is quoting from Psalm 18:49 (and 2 Samuel 22:50), where David said, “I will give thanks to You among the nations, O Lord, and I will sing praises to Your name.” The Hebrew word for nations is *goy* (Strong’s H1471), which means nation, heathen, or Gentile. It is used 558 times so the meaning is pretty established. When Paul quotes it, he is writing in Greek and the word is *ethnos* (Strong’s G1484), which also means race, nation, or Gentile. It is very clear in both the Old Testament and New Testament that God’s plan was for both Jews and Gentiles to glorify Him with one voice.

(Ps 18:49) “Therefore I will give thanks to You among the nations, O LORD, and I will sing praises to Your name.”

In verses ten David quotes Moses from Deuteronomy 32:43, where the Gentiles were to rejoice with God’s people. Paul is bringing overwhelming Scriptural support that God’s plan was for the Jews and Gentiles to glorify Him with one mind and one voice.

(Rom 15:10) “Again he says, “REJOICE, O GENTILES, WITH HIS PEOPLE.”

(Deut 32:43) “Rejoice, O nations, *with* His people...”

In verse 11, Paul quotes Psalm 117, which exhorts all nations and peoples to praise the Lord for lovingkindness and His truth.

(Rom 15:11) “And again, "PRAISE THE LORD ALL YOU GENTILES, AND LET ALL THE PEOPLES PRAISE HIM.”

(Psalm 117:1-2) “Praise the LORD, all nations; Laud Him, all peoples! {2} For His lovingkindness is great toward us, and the truth of the LORD is everlasting. Praise the LORD!”

Finally, Paul quotes from Isaiah 11:10, which speaks of the Messiah coming from the root of Jesse, and He will rule over the Gentiles, and in Him the Gentiles will hope. Paul has clearly established that the Gentiles were included in God’s plans, and that both the Jews and Gentiles were to worship, serve, and praise the Lord.

(Rom 15:12) “Again Isaiah says, "THERE SHALL COME THE ROOT OF JESSE, AND HE WHO ARISES TO RULE OVER THE GENTILES, IN HIM SHALL THE GENTILES HOPE.”

(Is 11:10) “Then in that day The nations will resort to the root of Jesse, who will stand as a signal for the peoples; and His resting place will be glorious.”

Last week we saw in Romans 15:4 that the Scriptures written in earlier time are for our instruction. Paul has just quoted these Scriptures that were given by God to Moses, Samuel, David, and Isaiah. Paul has established an important principle. When there are controversies and differences, we need to go to the Scriptures to resolve the matters. We need God’s counsel and input in resolving them. The Scriptures are our authority and foundation that we must build our lives and churches upon. We don’t base things on public polls, like our politicians; we base our lives and guiding principles on the Scriptures, which is what Paul has just done.

(Rom 15:4) “For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”

3. **Prayer for joy and peace** (Rom 15:13)

Paul ends this passage of Scripture with another prayer. He prays that the God of hope would fill them with all joy and peace in believing, so that they will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. When people have been going through a difficult time, especially a difficult conflict, they begin to lose hope. Paul prayed about encouragement and perseverance, and now he prays to the God of hope. Hope is something that helps us to persevere through those difficult

(Rom 15:13) “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

In the PGA Tour Qualifying Tournament in the fall of 1993 at Palm Springs, I had a disastrous final hole and missed getting my PGA Tour card by one shot. I was pretty disheartened as I walked from the scoreboard to my rental car. But, as I walked, the Holy Spirit gave me a song out of Romans 15:13, and He filled me with hope, joy, and peace. A reporter from Sports Illustrated heard what had happened to me and interviewed me. He saw such joy and peace that he ended up doing a three-page spread in Sports Illustrated about me and my family. Paul prays

for the Roman church to be filled with hope, joy, and peace. Like me, they needed a supernatural download of God's hope, joy, and peace.

When the church body accepts one another, pursues peace with one another, is unselfish and does not try to please itself, but to please others, and builds up one another, there will be unity, peace, and joy, which are pre-requisites of hope. Notice that Paul prays that they will be filled with all joy and peace SO that they will abound in hope. When people are lacking peace and joy, they will also be lacking hope. God, is the God of hope, and He wants you and I filled and abounding in hope.

How does this happen? Paul said that it is by the power of the Holy Spirit. Oftentimes, we think about healing, prophecy, or other manifestations when we think about the power of the Holy Spirit. However, Paul has prayed for joy and peace, which are fruits of the Holy Spirit. We should never undervalue the fruit of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit are also demonstrations of the power of the Holy Spirit.

(Gal 5:22-23) “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, {23} gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”

Earlier in Romans, Paul had spoken about exulting in tribulations, because tribulation brings perseverance, and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit.” Paul's first prayer is to God, who gives perseverance and encouragement, that He would grant them to be of one mind. There was obviously some struggles, and Paul wanted the Holy Spirit to work in their lives, granting them to be of one mind, to have perseverance, and encouragement, and ultimately hope, which does not disappoint.

(Rom 5:3-5) “And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; {4} and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; {5} and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

Conclusion and Applications

In Matthew 16:18, after Peter had stated, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God, Jesus said, “Upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.” Jesus is building His church. He does not build it by Himself; He has chosen to use you and I to work with Him to build the church. Our passage today is a wonderful example of the church and God doing their respective parts. First, Paul prayed that God would grant us to be of one mind, and to give perseverance, encouragement, joy, peace, and hope. He also exhorted the church to accept one another, to build one another up, pursue peace, and to please one another. Our passage also gives a clear picture of God's ultimate goal. He wants the church to be unified so that she can glorify Him with one voice.

(Matt 16:16-18) “Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.... {18} I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.”

Prayer

Father God, I pray that you will grant our churches to be of one mind so that we can with one voice glorify you. I pray that we will be faithful to do our part, accepting one another, building up one another, pleasing one another, and pursuing peace with one another. Give us perseverance and encouragement, joy and peace, and hope. May you be honored and glorified by our lives and our praise. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Q & A

- People have said the most segregated place in America is the church. Is that a fair accusation? What will it take to become of one mind and to glorify God with one voice?
- Have you ever had an infusion of joy, peace, or hope by God?
- What extremely important precedent does Paul establish in trying to resolve the division between Jews and Gentiles?
- What is the key to working and building with God as He builds the church? (Ps 127:1, John 15:4-5)
- Why does joy and peace play a key role in having hope?
- What are some keys to accepting others that come from a different cultural, sociological, mental, or physical background than us?

Introduction (Matt 28:18-20, Gen 26:24, Is 41:10, Jer 1:9, Hag 2:4, Ps 127, Rom 15:5-13)

1. **Prayer to be of the same mind with one another** (Rom 15:5-6, Acts 15:6-25, Mark 7:24-30, Acts 10:28, Matt 5:23-24, 1 Cor 6:1-7)

2. **Plea to accept one another** (Rom 15:7-12, Ps 18:49, Deut 32:43, Ps 117:1-2, Is 11:10, Rom 15:4)

3. **Prayer for joy and peace** (Rom 15:13, Gal 5:22-23, Rom 5:3-5)

Conclusion and Applications (Matt 16:16-18)