

Romans

Dr. Charles "Buddy" Parrish
June 11, 2025
Romans 15:7-13



Romans 15:7-13

Vss. 7-9a

- “Therefore, accept one another just as Christ accepted us...” Throughout this letter to the church in Rome, Paul’s primary theme has been unity. The wedge that was dividing the church consisted of the racial, cultural, and religious differences between the congregation’s Jewish and Gentile members. Rome was the most important city in the world and Paul was right to realize the potential influence the church in the city would carry. Thus, to Paul’s mind it was imperative that the church in Rome be strong, healthy, theologically grounded, and **unified** despite the differences, for it would be an example to all the churches of the known world and that example could be good or bad. Paul needed the Jews in the church to accept that Christ and His salvation was as much for the Gentiles as for them and he needed the Gentiles to accept the Jews and their traditions as long as those traditions honored Christ.
- On the whole, the Church in America today would get a failing grade in the subject of acceptance and unity. In the very earliest days of America there were the Spanish Catholics in the South and West, French Catholics in the North and Middle, with no tolerance for Protestants! Then in 1620, English Protestant Puritans landed at Plymouth Rock and it took less than one generation for there to be a religious split among them, as they exiled Roger Williams and his Baptists out into the wilderness in 1636. Soon John Wesley’s Methodists and Presbyterian Scots were moving into Georgia and the Ohio Valley. From 1700 to 1900 different denominations and sects virtually blanketed the country, and all were 100% convinced they were right and everyone else was wrong. To make matters worse, the slavery debate in the 1800’s began to divide most of those denominations. Add in the 20th century’s theological debates and divisions, the religious picture in America looks as fractured as a 1000-piece jigsaw puzzle. Looking at the recent collapse of the United Methodists as an example, perhaps as many as six new denominations will emerge from that denomination’s conflicts.
- And then one wonders why the state of the church in America today is such a mess. In one sense it’s a case of how no one wants to live in a burning house as conflict seems to define each denomination. But I think it’s more than that. In John 17 we have the benediction Jesus gave at the end of the Last Supper. Scholars refer to John 17 as The High Priestly Prayer. In it, in verses 20-21, Jesus tells us why Christian unity is vitally important. “I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those who believe in Me through their word, that they may all be **one**, even as You, Father, are

in Me and I in You, that they may also be in Us, **so that the world may believe that You sent Me.**” So as the Father and the Son are one, we too are to be one as we live out our lives in the Father and the Son. And this is important because it is by this that the world may believe that the Father sent the Son. John 3:16, is proved out to the world by our unity! But we mostly demonstrate our disunity...and then wonder why the world doesn’t believe, doesn’t know the Truth.

Vss. 9b-12

- To prove that all of this is not some novel new radical idea, Paul quotes four passages from the Greek translation of the Jewish Bible: Psalm 18:49; Deuteronomy 32:43; Psalm 117:1; Isaiah 11:10.
- In all of these scriptures Paul sees a prophecy of a time when Gentiles, all the nations of the world, will kneel before Christ and be accepted into the Kingdom of God. So as the Father and the Son are accepting of all people, so too are we as His servants to so accepting.
- This idea is pervasive in Paul. To the Colossians he wrote this message in 3:10-14 and similarly to the Galatians in 3:26-29 where he fully equates Jew and Gentile in the Kingdom of God.

Vs. 13

- If we are able to live in unity amazing things can happen, for peace and unity are the right amount of sunshine and rain that allow the flowers of the Holy Spirit to bloom, flowers like Hope, Joy, and Peace.
- It has been said that with God there are no hopeless situations, only people who have grown hopeless about them, such is the weakness of people’s faith. But for the one who holds fast to faith, nothing Satan can do can diminish our hope, for we know that our Redeemer lives.
- Christian joy is not the same as the world’s idea of pleasure. Good food, exciting experiences, fun moments are the kinds of things that bring pleasure, but they are all **external**. Christian joy springs from the Holy Spirit working within you, so when Paul speaks of Joy, he is speaking of something **internal**. External circumstances have no impact on our Joy. You may be beaten and locked into the darkest hole of a Philippian jail and still be overflowing with Joy!
- The same is true with the Christian understanding of Peace. We can have Peace without fear as we walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, because we **KNOW** that God is with us, within us, and we in Him. And that **NOTHING** can shake us from His hand.
- Such are the benefits and power of Christian unity!