

## WITH ONE HEART AND MOUTH GLORIFY GOD

Romans 15:1-13

Key Verse: 15:5,6

“May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

As we near the end of Romans, it is good to briefly review what we have learned. Romans chapters 1-8 explain the gospel thoroughly and clearly. Once we were objects of God’s wrath and anger. But Christ died for our sins and rose again for our justification. By faith in Jesus, we become God’s precious children: heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. Romans chapters 9-11 teach us God’s plan of world salvation. God chose Israel to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. They rejected God’s calling. But God did not give up. God called the Gentiles as his people to spread the good news of salvation. In short, Romans teaches us the core of the gospel and God’s plan of world salvation.

In chapters 12-15, Paul teaches the mixed congregation in Rome how to practice their gospel faith so that they may become a spiritual army for God’s world mission purpose. In chapter 14, he told us to make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. In today’s passage, Paul teaches us to glorify God with one heart and mouth.

First, the strong must bear with the failings of the weak (1-3).

Look at verse 1. “We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.” Strong Christians are those who have overcome themselves and their culture to live as citizens of God’s kingdom. Weak Christians are those who believe in Jesus, but lack the power of faith to overcome the world. They fail repeatedly in their spiritual struggles. Paul tells strong Christians to bear with the failings of the weak. What does this mean?

In the first place, to bear with the failings of the weak means to not give up on them or cut them off from fellowship because they fail. For the strong, it is tempting to cut off the weak, so as to not be burdened with them. Ultimately, this is pleasing oneself. Many Bible teachers study the Bible gladly with new students at first. But as the young ones fail repeatedly, they want to cut them off and be rid of them. The Bible says we must bear with the failings of the weak.

In the second place, to bear with the failings of the weak is to share their suffering together. This is different from tolerating them. It is to “bear with” or “suffer together with” them. Jesus “bore with” Peter. Jesus knew that Peter would deny him three times on the night of his arrest. When Jesus foretold this, Peter did not accept it. When weak Peter did not listen, Jesus prayed for him. In Luke 22:32 Jesus said, “But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.” Peter failed completely. But Peter’s faith did not fail. It led him to repentance. Then he could strengthen his brothers with absolute gospel faith. When young ones fail, strong ones must pray for them without giving up, like Jesus did.

In the third place, to bear with the failings of the weak is to build them up in faith. Look at verse 2. “Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.” Here, “please his neighbor” does not mean to merely make his neighbor happy when he is feeling down. To please one’s neighbor is to build him up in faith. Sometimes it involves challenging him to try again when he has failed. In our society many people have a “victim mentality.” They see themselves as victims of a dysfunctional family or poverty or social and educational disadvantage. The victim mentality demands them to live in sorrow and self-pity. It prohibits them from struggling to overcome their situation or circumstances. But Christians are called to overcome the world by having faith in God. God specializes in using weak people to do great things by the power of the gospel. Dr. Samuel Lee had every reason to harbor a victim mentality because his own mother died when he was just eight months old. Under his stepmother, he was often mistreated. He longed for his mother’s love, but she was not there. Sometimes sorrow overwhelmed him and he cried many tears. But after he met Jesus, he was changed. He found that Jesus carried all his sorrows on the cross. He found the love of Jesus that satisfied his soul. He became strong in faith until he could be a mother-like shepherd for young people. He discovered God’s great vision to make Korea a missionary-sending country. He helped many sorrowful young Koreans to have faith in God Almighty until they believed they could be missionaries to the world. In bearing with weak people, Dr. Lee loved them like a mother. He also planted God’s vision in their hearts. To do

so, he gave many kinds of training. Frequently, the one receiving training did not like it at the time. But the training built him or her up in faith. Many weak people became missionaries. At present 1,600 UBF missionaries are in 72 nations.

We pray for North America to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Outwardly, many young Americans look strong; they have healthy bodies and U.S. citizenship. Yet so many are wounded because they grew up in dysfunctional families. Others have been spoiled through materialism and a hedonistic lifestyle. When they should really study hard, they play video games or watch movies. Their minds become scattered and they cannot concentrate. They could be spiritual leaders, but they become third-class citizens. They feel okay because they can buy a 62" flat screen television. But as young Americans live in this way, people from developing countries are invading the universities and the corporate world. They succeed because they sacrifice zealously for the sake of future success. For young Americans to maintain leadership in their own nation, they need shepherds who can bear with their failings until they overcome themselves and many Ph.D. shepherds are raised.

One young American lady was gorgeous enough to be a fashion model. But as a youngest daughter, she was spoiled by her loving parents. After taking everything for granted, she lived in the darkness of sin. She became sick spiritually; especially with chronic laziness. She had no strength to make her bed in the morning. Growing up in a Christian culture, she knew many Genesis Bible stories. But she never realized that God put man and woman in the garden of Eden to work it. She had thought that work was punishment. Then she met Jesus through one-to-one Bible study. Heavenly sunlight began to shine into her soul. Her sins were forgiven. But her laziness remained. Then her shepherds began to train her to cook, wash dishes, and make the bed. It was so hard for her at first. But by the constant encouragement of her shepherds, she became stronger and stronger. Now she eats Daily Bread and prays every morning. She is qualified to become a Ph.D. shepherd's wife in a country north of the U.S. May God help us to bear with young Americans one by one, until 1000 Ph.D. shepherds are raised.

Sometimes, when the strong bear with the weak, the weak became stronger. But this does not always happen. Many times, perhaps most of the time, the weak do not get better at all. We may wonder how long we must bear with the failings of the weak. Well, this is the lifestyle of those who follow Jesus. Look at verse 3. "For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: 'The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.'" No one is stronger than Christ, for he is the very Son of God. He could have looked down on all weak sinners and cut us off when we failed. But he did not. Instead, he humbled himself to share in our humanity. Once made flesh, he did not live like a king, demanding others to serve him. Instead, he became a servant of all. He bore the insults and shame that our failings deserved. Once Jesus met a tax collector named Levi. He was a moral failure, for he chose to live a selfish life that damaged others for his own gain. In modern terms, he was like a drug dealer. One day Jesus said to him, "Follow me" (Mk 2:14). Levi realized that Jesus had hope for him. Then he left everything and followed Jesus. Levi tasted joy for the first time in many years. So he had a big dinner party in Jesus' honor with all of his tax collector friends. The Pharisees began to criticize Jesus for eating with sinners. Then Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick, I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mk 2:17b). Jesus quietly bore insult for the sake of Levi. Jesus did this for many people.

Ultimately, Jesus bore on the cross the shame and disgrace that all sinners deserve. The authorities crucified Jesus between two criminals in order to shame him extremely. Passers by hurled insults at him. Jesus shed his holy blood and was pierced in the side as a ransom sacrifice for our sins. Jesus could have called down a legion of angels at any time to destroy those who were insulting him. Instead, he bore the insults in our places for our sins. Jesus is our good shepherd who gave his life for us. Since Jesus bore our sins and shame in this way, to set us free, we ought to bear with the failings of the weak.

Second, God gives hope and a spirit of unity (4-13).

Look at verse 4. "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." The strong must bear with the failings of the weak. However, it cannot be done with human strength. It can be done when we have the hope of God in our hearts. How can we have the hope of God? The hope of God comes through Bible study. For example, when we study Exodus, we find that the people of Israel were full of weaknesses and a slave mentality. But God called them to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. This was possible only by God's one-sided grace and through his divine training. God

has hope because he is God Almighty; nothing is impossible with God. When we meet God in Bible study, we can find hope for ourselves and others.

The hope of God is different from the American Dream. The American Dream is to enjoy a nice life on earth with plenty of material blessings. It is family-centered, or at best nationalistic. In the end, it leads to despair. But the hope of God is to fulfill God's world mission purpose to save all men from their sins, missing no one. God's hope transcends national barriers and generation gaps. God's hope is unchanging and everlasting. Ultimately, God's hope is for a new heaven and a new earth. It is for the kingdom of God to come on earth as it is in heaven. When God shares this hope with us, we become bearers of God's hope. We must study the Bible until this hope fills our hearts.

Those who are united in God's hope can be united in spirit. Look at verse 5. "May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus...." This unity is not at all political. It is not based on mutual benefit. It is spiritual unity that comes from God. It is the distinctive gift of God to his people. The goal of this spiritual unity is to glorify God. Look at verse 6. "...so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Jesus prayed for his church, Jew and Gentile alike, that they might be one, just as Jesus and the Father are one (Jn 17:21). This is the greatest testimony to the world that Jesus is God.

The name of our church is "University Bible Fellowship Church." Fellowship is our middle name. This fellowship forms through Bible study, testimony sharing and a decision to obey the world mission command. This fellowship may reveal God's love more convincingly to the people of our times than the most eloquent sermon.

For the last two weeks, we have joined together in prayer for the upcoming international conference. After listening to Bible messages, we pray together with common prayer topics. As spiritual unity forms, the work of God grows. For example, there is Shepherd Rhoel Lomahan fellowship. To be honest, in the beginning Shepherd Rhoel did not like his fellowship leader, Dr. Ben Toh. Once, he even prayed that Dr. Toh would be deported. That was long ago. Over the years, they studied the Bible together deeply and learned the hope of God and God's world salvation purpose. They became one in Jesus. Recently, Dr. Ben turned over leadership of the fellowship to Shepherd Rhoel. The love of God is evident among them. So God's work is growing. Last week, Kristin Ward was inspired by her fellowship prayer to participate in conference registration. Out of nowhere, God gave her two sheep who fully registered. She was so happy she ran through the center dancing.

As we pray to host the international conference, spiritual unity is vitally important. It is not for our success; it is for the glory of God. Let's read verse 6 together again, "...so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." May God grant us a spirit of unity as we pray to glorify God and greatly encourage all UBF missionaries through this conference. May God grant UBF worldwide a spirit of unity to glorify God by carrying out the world mission command.

To achieve true spiritual unity, we must remember Jesus Christ. Look at verse 7. "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God." Christ accepted each of us while we were still sinners who were helpless and weak. To accept us, Christ had to go to the cross as a ransom sacrifice for our sins. Likewise, we must accept Jesus' children though it requires an intense spiritual struggle. Look at verse 8. Christ became a servant of the Jews to confirm God's promises made to the patriarchs so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy. In other words, Jesus humbled himself and made every effort to help the Jews live up to God's calling to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. God never gave up on the Jews. God's hope to use them as a shepherd nation is unchanging.

In verses 9-12, Paul quotes several Old Testament passages to explain God's unchanging hope for Israel to be a blessing to the Gentiles for the glory of God. Verse 9b says, "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name." In this verse, the people of Israel and the Gentiles together praise God. Verse 10 says, "Again, it says, 'Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.'" This verse exalts God's hope that the Gentiles would rejoice, acknowledging that they were included as God's people by his mercy. It implies their respect for the people of Israel as God's servants. Verse 11 says, "And again, 'Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and sing praises to him, all you peoples.'" Verse 12 says, "And again, Isaiah says, 'The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him.'" From among David's descendants the Messiah would come to save not only Israel, but the Gentiles as well. Paul quoted many verses to teach us that God never gave up hope for his people

Israel. His hope was to make them a blessing to the Gentiles. Look at verse 13. "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

Today we learn that we must praise and glorify God with one heart and mouth. To do so, we must bear with the failings of the weak. We must learn the hope of God for world salvation and live with this hope in our hearts. May God help us to do so through deep Bible study.