

United We Stand # 48

Romans 15: 1-7

For several weeks now we have been discussing the obligations we share in regard to one another. Although we are all individuals, given specific and separate gifts of the Lord, we make up one body in Christ. In order for the church to function as it should, each member must be in their place, embraced and encouraged by the entire body, while making contributions according to the gifts we have received.

We have talked about the diversity of the church and the harmony that can be found among such diversity. Paul was writing to the church at Rome. Keep in mind, the Romans ruled the known world at this time. Their reach and influence was felt in every province that Paul ministered. The church at Rome would have been a very diverse group, made up of people from all over the Roman Empire. Paul knew the importance of unity among the church and Rome was no exception.

The modern church, and Fellowship in particular, is no exception either. We have a diverse congregation, coming from different backgrounds, and each possessing differing gifts. In order to function in a way that pleases the Lord and accomplishes His purpose, each must be in their place, contributing to the work of the body, while being embraced and encouraged by the body. Unity is imperative if the church is to function and prosper as the Lord desires. Our differences should not create division, but allow us to minister more effectively. Let's examine the [observations](#) of Paul within the text as we consider: [United We Stand](#).

I. The Responsibility We Share (1-2) – Here we discover the responsibilities each member of the body shares with one another. This responsibility involves:

A. A Sacrificial Life (1) – [We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves](#). Paul challenges a common attitude of human nature. In fact, being an effective member within the body of Christ goes against much human reasoning. Somewhere within each of us is the desire to take the easy path, always looking out for our best interests and desires. In order to please the Lord and edify the body, those who are strong are to lend a shoulder to bear the heavy load of the weak, placing their needs above our own. We are to live sacrificial lives for the good of the body. Jesus bore our infirmities and sin on the cross. He set the supreme example we are expected to follow as we serve Him and those around us!

B. A Supportive Life (2) – *Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.* We are also expected to live in such a way that supports and builds up the entire body. We must not seek to live our lives simply to please ourselves and meet our own wishes and desires. Our lives are to be lived in way that will encourage, build up, and benefit the body of Christ as a whole. As we all contribute the gifts we have received, collectively we encourage one another and provide for the needs within the body. Such responsibility doesn't necessarily involve being noticed more than others or having a position of prominence. It is simply serving where God has placed us for the good of the body. We may not have a lead role, but our contributions are all essential. (Our girls have been involved in chorus for many years. They both sang the alto part. Most often this part serves as an accompaniment to the lead, the soprano, but without the contributions of the alto section, the performance would have been lacking and dull. A good alto section helps a good soprano section perform.)

- Now, let's clarify this statement before we move on. Paul is not implying that the approval of men is our ultimate goal. He is not advocating we abandon biblical convictions to gain acceptance and approval from the world. We must keep this statement in context. He is dealing with the workings of the body of Christ. We place the needs of others, and the goals of the entire body above our own, seeking the good of the body even if we have to serve in a supportive role.

II. The Representation We See (3-4) – Here Paul provides solid and convincing examples for us to follow in our service to the Lord and the body of Christ. Consider:

A. The Obedience of the Savior (3) – *For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.* For those who may struggle with being submissive and giving of themselves for the good of others, they need to look no further than the Lord Himself. Bear in mind, Jesus is the eternal God-Man. He came to this earth and lived as a servant of men, offering Himself as the atoning sacrifice for sin. He did not come to promote His own agenda or please Himself; He came to do the will of the Father. Jesus fully submitted to the will of God in the redemption of mankind. He who knew no sin became sin so the wicked could be cleansed of sin and reconciled to God. The sinless Lamb of God bore the sin of the entire world on our behalf. He suffered and endured unspeakable agony in our place! *Mat.26:39 – And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. John 12:27 – Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.*

- If Jesus, the Son of the living God, was willing to submit Himself for the benefit of others, should we not be willing to do the same. He set the example we are to follow. There will never

need to be another sacrifice to atone for sin, but just as Christ submitted to the will of God in service to others, so must we!

B. The Ordinance in the Scriptures (4) – [For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.](#) Paul knew the Christian life of service and sacrifice would be difficult for many. There would be times of adversity and defeat. There would be times when many were tempted to listen to the flesh and please themselves rather than seeking to edify the body. In those moments of weakness there was a constant source of strength and encouragement in the Word of God. The Scriptures are filled with examples of faithful servants who endured hardship, sacrificed for others, and endured in the faith in order to please the Lord and be of benefit to those who served Him. The triumph of the Old Testament Saints and Christ Himself would serve as a source of strength, hope, and patience.

- I know our lives are difficult at times, and often it seems we give much more than we receive. In those time of discouragement, we need to look to the Word of God for strength and guidance. Noah served the Lord alone. Abraham waited 25 years for the promised son. Daniel served in a foreign land. Jeremiah preached and yet his message fell on deaf ears, being rejected and persecuted for his faith. Paul suffered much adversity, pain and imprisonment for the sake of the Gospel. Jesus came unto His own and was crucified by those He came to save. These all endured faithful in the midst of extreme difficulty. We can overcome in Christ as well.

III. The Relationship We Share (5-7) – Here we discover the beautiful relationship we share in Christ, all being part of His glorious body. Paul discusses:

A. Our Common Purpose (5) – [Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus.](#) Paul prayed that God would provide the patience and consolation they each needed to be likeminded in service to one another, pleasing to the Lord while following His great example. He knew there was one common purpose for the church and each member of the body needed to share that purpose while contributing to achieving it. Their purpose was threefold: exalting the Savior, edifying the body of Christ, and reaching those who had not received Christ as their Savior. There had to be unity of purpose for the church to achieve her ultimate goal.

- The purpose of the body has not changed. We must share the vision, embracing our purpose, and each contribute to reaching our goals. If we fail to meet any of the obligations, we are not fulfilling our responsibilities. This will never happen apart from unity of spirit and genuine commitment shared by all.

B. Our Consistent Praise (6) – *That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.* One cannot ignore the reference to corporate praise Paul speaks of here, but if that is all we get from this statement, we have missed the depth of his words. In essence Paul is proclaiming, as the body functions as it should, everything we do and say glorifies God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. We praise Him with our voices; we praise Him with our actions; we praise Him with our attitudes. Everything we do and say bears consistent, continual praise to the Lord we serve!

- Paul declares this must be the desire of each member of the body. Do you remember the example I used of the girls singing? Each member of the chorus must participate and offer their talents in order to make beautiful music. The principle is the same here. The church will not offer consistent praise if we do not share one mind and with one mouth glorify the Lord.

C. Our Confident Position (7) – *Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.* The church is challenged to receive each member as Christ received them. The Lord embraced us where we were, as we were. The only requirement was faith. He didn't require specific abilities or financial offerings. He came to us in our depraved, unworthy state and offered forgiveness and hope.

- We must receive others with the same attitude, seeing value in each member of the body. We must value their presence, seek to ensure their wellbeing, and encourage their contribution to the body as a whole. In essence Paul is saying there is no "I" in Team; there are no big "I's" and little "You's." We are all saved by the same grace, placed within the same body, serving the same Lord, working toward a common goal, and headed toward the same heaven! Each member of the body is needed and important to the wellbeing of the whole. We need each other!

Conclusion: This has been a challenging portion of Scripture. These are simple truths, easily understood, and yet many congregations fail to abide by them. We need to be united in Christ, valuing each member, and encouraging their contribution to the work. Christ set the example we are expected to follow. We can achieve much if we will seek to serve Him according to His will. There is a great work to be done, and it can be overwhelming alone, but together we can achieve great things for the Lord through His help and guidance.

If there are needs today, Jesus is the answer. If you are not seeking unity or have failed to see the value in it, come to the Lord for help today. If you are yet unsaved, not knowing Christ as your Savior, you are not part of the body. Come to Him and respond to the call for salvation!