

“Be of the Same Mind Toward One Another”

(Romans 12:16)

INTRODUCTION:

1. In accordance with our theme for the year my preaching has been interspersed with lessons concerning the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace.
 - A. A few weeks ago, I talked about how we are family in Christ.
 - B. Today I want to talk about how we must “**be of the same mind toward one another**” (Rom. 12:16), a command that carries a great deal of weight particularly in the context of Romans.
2. To address it I want to ask you to put yourself, if you will, in the 1st Century shoes of:
 - A. Someone who is part of a people/nation that for some 2000 years had been the only ones to know and worship the one true God, the Creator of all things, and to be waiting for **the Messiah** who was promised to bring salvation, righteousness, honor, to you and your people.
 - i. Have been in covenant with that God and guided by His divine [and superior] law (Rom. 3:1-2).
 - ii. These things have made your lives very different from the world. So different that...
 - a. The lives of the peoples and nations around you were [and should have been] sickening, dirty, vile, immoral, debased, being condemned by God (Rom. 1:18-32).
 - b. Even what/how these nations worshipped was revolting, being not only false, but even sexually immoral, perverted, violent, not to mention bizarre and grotesque.
 - c. What these other nations ate was often unclean, at times containing blood as a main ingredient! Can you imagine?
 - d. If you inadvertently touched them, you were believed to be made unclean (Mark 7:4).
 - iii. You were so different that even when these other people converted to your law and ways, they were still physically separated from you in the temple of worship.
 - iv. This was the life of a **Jew** and is what likely explains your often elevated view of yourself.
 - B. Now try to picture yourself as someone who was not a Jew, had not known God or of the coming Messiah, and had for as long as could be remembered served idols.
 - i. Believed, or likely observed, as did so many like yourself, that the Jews thought themselves **superior to you** and you clearly **felt the separation**.
 - ii. Thought the Jews **hated everyone** who was not a Jew, and had lived with their disdain for your life, your culture, your food, and your religion all your life.
 - iii. Had possibly noted, maybe with a sense of pleasure, their hypocrisy—their condemning others’ sin while failing to condemn their own (Rom. 2:1-11).
 - iv. That was the life of a **Gentile**, and it likely fueled a common disdain for the Jews!
3. Now try to picture yourself in the shoes of that:
 - A. **Jew**, and the **Messiah has come**, Pentecost has happened, and Christ’s **apostles** are now **preaching the saving gospel of God’s grace for you in Jesus**.
 - i. And now **Jews** by the 1000s, including yourself, are being saved and experiencing the times of refreshing promised by the prophets (Acts 2,3,4).
 - ii. It is a glorious time of joy for you and the Jews in Christ, with a oneness, a sense of community and sacrifice, that has not been seen!
 - iii. Your world is abuzz with the preaching of the gospel, great miracles being done [God’s presence is clearly among you], and the message is spreading into Judea and (gulp) Samaria—to those half-Jews!
 - iv. But then a **serious question arises**. For, you hear that a Jewish Christian—the apostle Peter himself—has gone to the **Gentiles**, entered their house, ate with them, and preached to them the saving gospel resulting in **their supposed salvation** (Acts 10-11), and who even stated as **truth** “that **God is not one to show partiality**,³⁵ but **in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him**” (Acts 10:34-35). “**Surely not!**”
 - B. Then, for you a **Gentile**, after some 10 years have passed since that Pentecost, the **salvation of Cornelius’ household** has now opened the door of salvation to you.

- i. You are hearing for the first time that the Messiah the Jews waited for has come and died for you also, and that through Him you too can have forgiveness of sins and eternal life!
- ii. And 1000's of Gentiles like yourself, those once separated, seemingly part of the trash heap, are being saved in Christ!
- iii. The same wonderful blessings lived and looked for by the Jews for all those years are now yours for the taking by God's grace and faith in Christ. This was God's plan all along! **Wow!**
- C. Yes, the Messiah has broken down the dividing wall (Eph. 2:13-18 – "But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were **far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.** ¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace, **who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall,** ¹⁵ by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He **might make the two into one new man,** thus establishing **peace,** ¹⁶ and **might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross,** by it having put to death the enmity.").
- D. And now together **Jew** and **Gentile** ask, "**How can it be?!**"...but for very different reasons!
- 4. That was the reality of the early church—the gospel bringing together in one body, and in local churches, Jew and Gentile, people who **in their own minds** (and in so many ways) could not have been more different!
 - A. It was to those two groups in the church at Rome that Paul wrote (Rom. 12:16 – "**Be of the same mind toward one another;** do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation."!)! Now think about that!
 - B. Can't you hear them saying, "Are you telling me that I as a **Jew** or I as a **Gentile** am supposed to think the same way toward **them** as they are to think toward me? How can I do that?!"
- 5. So, brethren, what did this command mean for **them**...and does it mean for **you** and **me** today?
 - A. For this was not commanded simply to people of different socio-economic backgrounds, to people of different color, etc., but to people who were seemingly different in most every way!
 - B. The only thing they had in common, and most important, was their state as **condemned sinners in need of God's grace** offered in **Christ Jesus**, as Romans 1-6 so masterfully presents.
 - C. **And that, my friends, was to change everything about their, and our, view of self and others!**
 - D. So, let's look at the **context** of this command by which we learn that **being of the same mind toward one another concerns...**

BODY:

- **I. A common love and honor** (Rom. 12:9-10 – "Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor").
 - A. Whether Jew or Gentile, one in Christ is to...
 1. Not **fake love**, not "put on a mask" of love, toward one's brethren (12:9).
 - a. They were to show truly selfless active interest in the wellbeing of one another, *demonstrating* affection and good-will.
 - b. There were to be no smiles and hugs followed by quiet exchanges with fellow Jews or Gentiles about the other's ways, what they were really thinking, or their obvious faults!
 2. That did not mean one **could avoid hypocrisy** by **avoiding the others**, for there was to be **devotion to one another in brotherly love** (12:10)!
 - a. Being **devoted** here also carries the idea of having **fondness for**, or **cherishing**, someone, which here is to be **done in brotherly love!**
 - b. Brotherly love means **warm affection** shown because **you are brethren.**
 - c. You cannot say you cherish or have warm affection for those you avoid!
 3. If that were not enough, being of one mind toward each other meant to "**give preference to one another in honor,**" or, that they must **outdo one another** is showing honor (12:10b)!
 - a. This is nothing short of amazing! For God is commanding **Jews** to outdo their **Gentile** brothers and sisters in Christ, and **vice-versa**, in their efforts to show how much they value and esteem these other brethren and their fellowship!

- b. Can you imagine how difficult all this would be? And yet it is demanded...and possible...in abundance...in Christ!
 - B. If God in Christ made it possible and demanded 1st Century Christians show genuine love and abundant honor that crossed the Jew/Gentile boundaries, surely our differences cannot exempt us from doing the same.
 - 1. We may have different skin colors, socio-economic and religious backgrounds, etc., but like them we were all **sinners in dire need of God's grace in Christ** and have **nothing to boast about** outside of Jesus Christ and Him crucified!
 - 2. So, as God in Christ has loved us as sinners, to be of one mind toward one another we must love as God loves us (1 John 4:7-11 – “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸ The one who does not love does not know God, for **God is love.** ⁹ By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹ **Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.**”).
- **II. Properly dealing with our adversaries** (12:14 – “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.”).
 - A. It is so easy to relegate this to those outside of Christ who may be hostile toward Christians, but that would be a mistake.
 - 1. This could have easily been, and likely was, a scenario faced among 1st century Christians!
 - 2. How might you feel about worshipping God in Christ in the local church...
 - a. As a **Jew** who sees a Gentile, maybe a Roman soldier, etc., who had persecuted and hurt you or your family, who is now **presiding over the Lord's Supper/table**?
 - b. As a **Gentile** who has faced the verbal abuse, condescending attitudes and actions, from a Jew who is now leading prayer and thanking God for His **love and grace for all men**?
 - c. About being not only required to accept that person as a brother in Christ, a saint loved by God, but as **someone you must bless**—one you must speak well of and seek their best by asking God to bring good things into their lives!?
 - 3. The Spirit left no wiggle room about this (Romans 12:17, 21 – “Never pay back evil for evil to anyone...²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”).
 - a. You mean I cannot, at least, give them a piece of my mind about what they have done to me?
 - b. You mean I cannot just ignore that Jew/Gentile and just keep my feelings to myself?
 - c. You mean I actually must overcome what evil, what great wrongs, I believe I have witnessed in these others toward me and my loved one **with good deeds toward them**?
 - d. **God's answer: YES!** That is what being of one mind in Christ requires!
 - B. If God demanded 1st Century Jew and Gentile Christians to **bless** and **do good** to those who may have persecuted, hurt, caused deep emotional scars, or maybe even killed or imprisoned someone they loved (a Jew listening to Saul/Paul!), surely being of the same mind toward one another demands the same from us today!
 - 1. Now, I get it. There may be a Christian who is ignoring you, or who has lied to you or about you or someone close to you, or showed a side of themselves that you cannot stand. I get that. Things like these hurt and are hard to overcome and address!
 - 2. Why? Because deeds like these hurt and annoy and our **pride gets in the way!**
 - 3. Since Jesus willingly suffered for our good, we must be willing to suffer for the good of our adversaries (1 Pet. 2:21-25 – “For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also **suffered for you**, leaving you **an example for you to follow in His steps,** ²² **Who committed no sin**, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; ²³ and while being reviled, **He did not revile in return**; while suffering, He **uttered no threats**, but **kept entrusting Himself to Him** who judges righteously; ²⁴ and **He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross**, so that we might **die to sin** and **live to righteousness**; for by **His wounds you**

were healed.²⁵ For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.”).

- a. That is the one mind we must have to behave properly toward our adversaries, especially our brethren, seeing we follow Christ who approach offences this way for us!
- b. Are you, am I, willing to put aside pride and be **wounded**, suffer, for the sake of a brother or sister in Christ so that our relationship with them might be healed?

• **III. How we value self and others** (12:16 – “Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.”).

A. When Paul wrote this by the Spirit to 1st century Jew and Gentile Christians, he was demanding a **complete** change in at least 1500 years of cultural thought and attitude!

1. Can’t you hear the **Jew**: “You mean **I get no special recognition** for my life **lived as a Jew under the Law**? All that meticulous work, all that I gave up, now means nothing? And **just like that** *they* are **as good as me, equal to me before God**—*those* who have spent their life worshipping false gods, doing horribly immoral and perverted things, eaten all kinds of unclean foods, etc.? **You have got to be kidding!**”
2. Can’t you hear the **Gentile**: “You mean to tell me that **just like that I am as good as them**—**equal** to *those* who have looked down their nose at my culture, food, even my very being for my entire life? **Haha!**”
3. **God’s answer** to Jew and Gentile: “**Yes, you are valued equally!** And **do not be haughty or wise in your own estimation**, but **associate with the lowly!**”
4. Why?
 - a. Because no one **stands** before God **except by faith in Jesus** (Rom. 3:21-25 – “But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,²² even the **righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ** for all those who believe; **for there is no distinction**;²³ **for all have sinned** and fall short of the glory of God,²⁴ being **justified as a gift by His grace** through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;²⁵ whom God displayed publicly as a **propitiation in His blood through faith**...”). It is not you; it is God in Christ!
 - b. And that fact changes everything about our view of self and one another (Gal. 3:26-29 – “For you are all sons of God **through faith** in Christ Jesus.²⁷ For all of you who were baptized into Christ have **clothed yourselves with Christ**.²⁸ There is **neither Jew nor Greek**, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for **you are all one in Christ Jesus**.²⁹ And **if you belong to Christ**, then you are **Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to promise**.”).

5. Did you hear that? All that we were and are, all the things we may have valued dearly or despised, have become worthless old garments to be shed for the glorious **clothing of Jesus Christ** and its great blessings of becoming **Abraham’s descendants and heirs of God**.

6. That is what our glorious God has accomplished in Jesus!

B. If God has made it possible for Jew and Gentile to rejoice in being Abraham’s descendants heirs of God together in Christ, surely our view of self and one another must change.

1. When the gospel is thriving, the local body will be filled with those whose families may have been **Christians for generations** and those whose **life in Christ began last week**.
2. This means some are going to be thinking these others need to “tighten up,” while these others may be thinking those people need to “loosen up!”
3. This means there will be honest and sincere disagreements about God’s word, different viewpoints and applications of that word, with some being clearly wrong.
 - a. We must not squelch that or be horrified or angered by it. This is what is going to happen when people of different...everything...come into Christ. Can you imagine a Jew/Gentile bible class? We are at different levels in Christ, and we need to respect and embrace that!
 - b. Our assemblies and classes are not to lay down a “creed” that all must line up behind or be rejected (for who decides that creed), but to explore and learn from God’s word.

- c. And what better place to **discuss our differences** and **grow toward the truth** than among those who have true love and honor for one another, forbearance to the point of suffering for one another's good, and humility before God?
- 4. Having the same mind toward one another means understanding that “you have not arrived,” but instead having a mindset of love for truth and desire to continually **strive together using our gifts to help** one another reach the unity of faith and knowledge of Christ—maturity (Eph. 4:11-16 – “And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as **evangelists**, and some as **pastors** and **teachers**,¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the **building up of the body of Christ**;¹³ until **we all attain to the unity of the faith**, and of the **knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man**, to the **measure of the stature** which **belongs to the fullness of Christ**.¹⁴ As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;¹⁵ **but speaking the truth in love**, we are **to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ**,¹⁶ from whom **the whole body** [everyone], being fitted and held together **by what every joint supplies** [you are a gift to the body—providing vital things!, rp], according to the **proper working of each individual part, causes the growth** of the **body** for the building up of itself in love.”).
- CONCLUSION:
 1. So, “be of one mind toward one another” no matter how difficult you might think that to be, knowing that it took God’s willingness to send Jesus into this world to live as a man, to suffer, and to die on the cross for you to stand accepted, in oneness, before Him.
 - 2. So, as Paul said in **Philippians 2:1-2**, “Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion,² make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.”).
 3. May God bless our efforts to serve Him faithfully as one body in Christ!
 4. I hope you see the wonders of God’s love and what the gospel can and will do for the lives of those who accept it and come into fellowship with Christ and His people.
 5. Will you come to Jesus today? If you are a sinner in need of God’s love and grace to save, please come.