

Title: Being of the Same Mind

Text: Romans 15:1-13

Today, I want to conclude our study in the book of Romans. I sincerely hope that this study has blessed you half as much as I have been blessed in preparing these messages. Especially these last few chapters as we have looked at the APPLICATION OF GOD'S WONDERFUL RIGHTEOUSNESS TO THE BELIEVER.

This message will, also, conclude this section of scripture dealing with (2B) CHRISTIAN LIBERTIES. And so far we have seen that CHRISTIAN LIBERTY will ^(1C)exclude judgment of others. (2C) Secondly, Christian liberty will exercise love. (2C) Third, Christian liberty will experience discernment for yourself.

Now, today, we want to come to the final practice of our Christian liberty. And this involves (4C) being of the same mind within the body of Christ.

Take your Bibles and turn to Romans chapter 15. The book of Romans chapter 15 beginning with Vs 1...

(Read Romans 15:1-13)

Prayer

Now, these verses, Vs 1 thru 13 of Chapter 15, is really a continuation of Chapter 14. In chapter 14 Paul dealt with the principles of Christian liberty. And in Chapter 15 verses 1 thru 13 Paul brings this whole discussion to a wonderful conclusion by encouraging believers to ~~minister one to another.~~ ^{be of the same mind} Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another." And Paul is saying that love can be demonstrated by being of the same mind one towards another. ~~That is to think the same things.~~

Now, I don't know about you, but I find that very difficult. I find it difficult to think what you are thinking. And I find it difficult to really expect you to think what I am thinking. In fact, I am not sure I want you to know what I am thinking..

But, dear friends, these verses teach us that we are to have the same mind. To think the same things. ~~WHY? Because the unity of the Holy Spirit is not simply~~

How Can We Be Like-minded? How? How Can We do That?

Why? Because the unity of the Holy Spirit is not simply that we have come together, here, to assemble in one location. That doesn't make us one in the unity of the Spirit. Any more than boiling two eggs in one pan of water makes them the same egg...NO WAY!

We are here because we believe that Jesus Christ is Lord. And thus we are one in the Spirit because of our common belief in the deity of Jesus Christ and His purpose for our lives.

But, let's be honest. Many times we do not enjoy this unity. We are not of the same mind. We are not ministering one to another. You see, the Bible teaches that we must not think of our own things, but look on the things of someone else. To concentrate on what the other person needs in his/her life. And, dear friends, wouldn't it be exciting if all of us would really think of what the other person needed? Wouldn't that be great? You know, if we were all trying to minister one to another, rather than trying to be ministered unto.

Well, that is what Paul is trying to get us to do, here, in these final verses on Christian liberty.

(4C) So, let's look at this matter of LIKE MINDEDNESS or HAVING THE SAME MIND.

And I want you to see this in two ways.

(1D) First of all, being of the same mind concerns our attitudes. And we find this in Verses 1 thru 6. And there are three things that I want you to see in these verses concerning our attitudes towards one another, *which will cause us to be like-minded.*

READ ROMANS 15:1-6)

Will you join with me in a moment of Prayer?

() In relationship to our attitudes of being of the same mind and thinking the same thing, there are three things that I would like to point out to you from these verses.

(1) Number one ~~First of all~~, in verses 1 and 2 in relationship to edification. The Bible teaches that we are to build up one another. And in this ^{Paul} draws forth a principle that is based on chapter 14. In chapter 14 there was a weak believer and a strong believer. The Bible doesn't want us to receive one another, as it says in chapter 14 verse 1, 'by passing judgement on another's opinions. Basically it is saying ..Don't judge one's motives and don't try to argue with them to prove your point.

Now, on the bases of all of that, Vs 1, chapter 15 starts out, "Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength."

~~we~~, of course if you feel that you are strong, then all those seating around you are weak. Well, learn to bear them. Maybe you are the weak brother and you don't know it. But, let's suppose you are not. Learn to bear them. And we should do this "not to please ourselves," because Vs 2 says.."Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to his edification."

Now, just for a moment, without turning to the person next to you. Just think for a moment of the person on your right and on your left. DO YOU REALLY INTEND TO BUILD THEM UP? DO YOU REALLY INTEND TO ENCOURAGE THEM? DO YOU REALLY INTEND TO EDIFIED THEM IN THE BODY OF CHRIST?

Well, if you do. What are you going to do to accomplish that goal? Suppose we would stop and take a break in our service, right now, and ask everybody to turn to the person next to you and build them up spiritually in Christ. WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

I mean it is one thing to talk about it. It is another thing to do something. WHAT WOULD WE DO?

The Bible says that are not to seek to please ourselves, but we should try to please others. And ~~trying~~ to build them up. Edification is very important... *in order to be like-minded*

(2) Secondly, we have, in verse 3, the example of Jesus. You cannot be motivated on wrong principles of motivation. The only real good ^{example} for believers is what Jesus ^{Paul} did. And so ^{Paul} says in Vs 3.. "For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, 'THE REPROACHES OF THOSE WHO ~~REPROACH~~ REPROACHED THEE (meaning the father) FELL UPON ME (meaning ^{Jesus} ~~the Messiah~~).'"

So, just to name the name of God brings some sort of reproach. The Bible says that when Jesus was reviled, He reviled not. When he was threaten he didn't try to get back at people. NO WAY..

I Peter chapter 2 says "to walk in the steps of Christ, who was willing to suffer, and to bear all the reproaches of people."

You see, Jesus never tried to please himself. He was always trying to please and build up others. And so, according to the example of Christ, our attitude should be---be of the same mind, seek to build others up. And that, dear friends, will help our unity in Christ.

(3) Third, we have the encouragement of the scriptures. Vs 4 and 5 ^{also} There is only really one way to build someone up. And that is with the Word of God. My opinions are really not that important. But what the Word of God says will build someone up.

Now, according to vs 4 every thing that was written in the Bible is for instruction and encouragement. And it comes right out of the Word. The scriptures give instruction and encouragement. And the reason for all of this is hope. There is hope that we can be of the same mind. There is hope that we can minister one to another. Because the Word of God has all the ~~en~~ encouragement that we need.

A verse of scripture shared in a time of need will do wonders for people. According to Vs 5 ^{perseverance and} ~~perseverance and~~ encouragement comes from God. It is "God who gives perseverance and encouragement to you to be of the same mind with one another." So, if we are going to be of the same mind, we must understand the SOURCE. Only God can make us of one mind, of one accord. () Now, what is the purpose of all of this? Vs 6 says "with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

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DO YOU KNOW WHAT SIN IS? You know what it is. Romans 3:23..All have sinned or missed the mark because they come short of glorifying God.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT IN THE BODY OF CHRIST? What is the point of all of us thinking the same thing? It is so that we can with one mind praise and glorify the Lord. Not ourselves but Him.

So, in our attitudes *in Relationships to being L.K. minded* we are to seek to build up, not please ourselves.

But to please others. *And an example is Jesus being of the same mind as ours, not only ourselves our attitudes, but*

(20) Now, secondly, in verses 7 to 13 we talk at the acceptance of all

believers. If we are going to be one, if we are really going to minister to each other, we have to receive everybody. We discussed this last week to some *degree in* ~~chapter~~ of chapter 14. Here, Paul discusses it from the stand point of Jew and Gentile.

Dear Friends
~~Now~~, if you lived in the days of the Apostle Paul the average church was Jewish. Not Gentile. The average person receiving the gospel in the beginning was Jewish. The Bible says that the Gospel of Christ was to the Jew, first, and also to the Gentile.

Now, you know the Jews for a long time would have nothing to do with the Gentiles,. They lived in separate homes. They did not fellowship with the Gentiles. They lived separate lives.

~~Now~~, Paul has taught over and over again that Jews and Gentiles in the body of Christ become one. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, bond or free, male or female. All are one in Christ.

Now, he is encouraging us to think the same thing. Everybody have the same mind. And you cannot do that if you have little categories of people. *BLACK or white or Brown*
~~You~~ *We* must accept all people. Whether they are Jew or Gentile. Or, whatever their backgrounds are. Everybody believing in Christ must be accepted. We must minister to all people. Not just to the ones we like. Or, the ones ~~with~~ *we dislike* ~~the same skin color.~~

By the way, there is kind off an interesting problem in all of us.

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Do you know why we minister to the people we like? Because, usually, they are the ones who minister to us. That is why we minister to them. If someone likes you, why not like them?

If someone loves you, why not love them. But what happens when we face someone who is a little unlovely? Or, who doesn't like us? Or who isn't of the same background or social patterns or what have you? ^{So} ~~So~~ to be of one mind, to really glorify God, to really please someone else, we have to love them because they believe in Christ, regardless of how much they may differ from us.

Now, just stop and think for a moment. Think of the folks in your row. Is there somebody there who you know is a believer in Christ, but you would rather not minister to? You would rather not get involved with? You would rather not be a close friend with? Someone seating right there in the same row. Maybe across the isle from you. Someone you meet every Sunday. ^{But,} ~~And~~ you would not want to get involved with.

^{Dear Friend} ~~People~~ that kind of thing is violating exactly what Romans 15 is trying to tell us. God wants all the believers to be of one mind, of one heart. And we can't do that unless we accept every single believers as being important in the body of Christ. That is so important. ^{AND He spells this out in Three ways}

(1) I would like you to notice, first of all, in verses 8 and 9 that the purpose of Christ teaches us this.

In the first case, for the Jew, Vs 8 tells us "For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision (meaning the Jew) on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers."

Here it is a case of faithfulness. Christ was honoring the promises of God to the Jews and he became a minister to them. Fulfilling the promises of the O.T.

Now, what about the Gentiles? Vs 9 "and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy. Here it is mercy."

Now, here is the point. If you are a Jew and you have come into the fold of Christ because of Christ's faithfulness to the O.T., Or you are a Gentile and you have come into the fold because of mercy, REGARDLESS of the way ^{you} ~~you~~ have come in, we are all, now, one in the body of Christ. One in Jesus Christ. ~~And~~ ~~we are to be like-minded.~~

(2) Then, secondly, he gives us some proof from the Word of God in verses 9 to 12. He quotes from the books of Psalms, Isaiah, Deuteronomy. And he says that the O.T. taught that all the nations (meaning Gentiles) were to praise the Lord along with the Jews. We were to be one. Even in Vs 12 he says that the Messiah, himself, was to rule over the Gentiles. And in Him shall the Gentiles hope. So, everybody, Jew or Gentile, is one in the body of Christ.

(3) ^{Now} NOW, in Vs 13 He lays before ^{us} the potential that we could all enjoy if we really think about it. He says, "Now may the God of Hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

The word PEACE is a very beautiful word for the unity of the Spirit. Did you know that? The word PEACE means to "BIND TOGETHER," For example in Ephesians 4 when Paul talks about keeping the unity of the Spirit, he says, "IN THE BOND OF PEACE."

In my office I have a little sign that says SHALOM. The Jewish word for PEACE...to bind together.

Peace is the word that more beautifully expresses the unity of the Spirit than anything else. PEACE.

^{SO} NOW, according to ^{Vs 13} the Bible God can fill you with joy...all joy and peace in what?....WHAT IS THE NEXT WORD IN VS 13?.....BELIEVING....

That is the only way it is going to happen, dear friends. Everyone who believes in Jesus Christ can be bound together. Peace and joy comes in believing. Not trying to be the same as in likes and dislikes as someone else. But in believing in Jesus Christ. Believing in the objective facts of God's Word. And then we can abound in hope by means of the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit working in all of us can produce that unity.

It is a wonderful thing. But it starts with belief and trust and acceptance of Jesus Christ as Saviour of your life. *That is the foundation.*

Now, I want to summarize this whole topic of Christian Liberty by sharing the four SPIRITUAL LAWS OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY. And I believe this is the most important part of our study. Four laws of Christian Liberty. I trust you will take them down and refer to them often. Because they do effect everything you do or you do not do.

(1) Number one, the Basic Law of Liberty. The basic law of liberty is for the mature Christian. It means this: Everything is O.K. except that which is specific called sin. Everything...I don't care what it is...Everything is O.K. except that which is specific called sin. Dear friends, that is the basic law of liberty. That is how free Christians are. They can do anything they want to accept sin.

(2) Now, building upon this basic law we come the law of love. And please note: This law is between Christians. Not unbelievers...Only between believers. The law of love means this: While I am free to do all things, I willingly keep myself from ~~doing~~ ^{doing} certain things which might offend my brother or sister. I will not cause my brother or sister to stumble. I am free to do anything that I want to, but I am going to stop myself from doing some things so that my brother or sister in the Lord will not stumble. And dear friends, this is always dealing with Christian to christian. Not unbelievers.

(3) Number three, the law of expediency. This law is only applied towards non-believers. It is not towards Christians. Just non-christians. You will find this discussed in I Cor. chapter 10. The law of expediency is this: while I am free to do all things, I have to evaluate whether to do it or not to do it, as it effects the response of that unbeliever! ^{To The Gospel} This involves an evaluation every time. You see, I am free to do it. But before I do it, I must evaluate whether or not it will affect that unbelievers response to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

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Here is an example as given in I Cor. Chapter 10. They had meat that was offered to Idols. Now, according to the Bible there was nothing wrong with that meat. It was a good steak. But, there were three issues involved that I Cor. 8 to 10 presents to us:

(1) ONE was eating that meat in a pagan temple. Pagan temples were used as banquet halls or social occasions. And it was often the case when believers would wind up there for maybe a public affairs meeting. Or, for a social occasion of some sort.

And he is seating there eating it in a pagan temple. And some brother who is weak comes by and see him in the pagan temple and he concludes that he believes in the idol.

(2) Secondly, buying meat in the market place. That good meat that was offered to idols was put in the market place and offered for sale. And it was advertized as meat offered to idols because it was always the best meat. Who wouldn't want to pay a higher price for that good meat? So, you go and buy some of those good steaks and another christian saw you buying that meat and he then concludes that you are supporting idolarty.

(3) The third case involved an invitation to dinner. You are invited to dinner by a non-believer. And this non-believer serves meat that has been offered to idols. Now, what do you do? The Bible says that if the non-believer says nothing, go ahead and eat the meat. There is nothing wrong with the meat. Aren't you free to eat? Now, if you are not free to eat it then that is another matter. You are going against your conscience. And you should never go against your conscience. But you are free to do anything. And if he offers you a good steak , eat it. And ask no question.

But suppose the non-believer says, according to I Corinthians 10, Hay, christian friend, this is meat offered to idols. WHAT DO YOU DO THEN? The Bible says don't touch it. He brought up the issue, so don't touch it. Now, why do you do that? Paul says for conscience sake...YOURS?...OH, NO... Your conscience isn't bothered because you can eat it or not eat it. It does make any difference to you. But his conscience is being bothered or he wouldn't has ask you in the first place. And you are interested in winning him to Christ.

And Paul said, whether therefore you eat or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God. In prayed that by all means I might win some. HE had one gola in mind and that was to win the non-believer to christ.

So, some times we must not do something in order to win that person to christ.

You see, a non-believer has already program himself that way. He already believes that a christian is somebody who doesn't do some things and does do other things. You know that, don't you? The things he does do. He goes to church and he tries to be good when he really isn't it//....

And the things he doesn't do: He doesn't drink or smoke or go with girls that do....

And if you follow that logic you can prove that your dog is a christina. That is right....My dog doesn't drink, he doesn't smoke, and he doesn't go with girl dogs who do.....(ha)....Good logic....

But, listen, christian, whether you know it or not, that is the way the unbelieving world looks at us. They evaluate us that way...Whether we like it or not it is true.

So, you see, we have to face each one of those issues. Now, some of the them are no longer in the area of doubtful things.

Let's take smoking. You know, I have never met anybody that was thrilled with smoking unless they are just starting. Have you?

People offer you a cigarette and you say, "No thanks, I don't smoke." And they say, "Boy, I wish I didn't."

I Notice that people are not a big fan of smoking. They want to quite. Some of you might be trying to quite. It is a big problem.

So, let's take smokeing. Smoking isn't a doubtful thing anymore. It is bad for your health.

But, there are some issues that are a little bit more shady. We are not sure. We don't know whether we should or should do it. Now, what do you do? You apply the spiritual laws of liberty in each case.

You see, are you turned into the Lord, or, are you just tuned into what brings you a little joy? Regardless of who it effects. If you are tuned into the Lord, you will be concerned with these spiritual laws.

(40) The fourth law is the law of spiritual effectiveness. Some times left out of our thinking in christian liberty. *For You Personally*

We find this law in I Corinthians 9. Paul said that he was free to do whatever he wanted to. To eat..to drink..to take a wife. He wasn't married at that time. He could do anything he wanted to. But he then went on to say that some thing he refused to do for the sake of the Gospel. The sake of the Gospel...

Now, I don't know what that means to you. But it means a lot ot me. It may mean watching a lot less T.V. then your are presently watching. You might be more effective if you watched less T.V. It might mean something else to you. But we are not to judge one another in these things. But take that law and apply it. ^{To yourself} Is there anything that you are doing, that if you stopped doing you would be more effective as a christâans...more effective as a christian Father..mother...young person...

The truth is that we all have these things in our life. Spiritual effectiveness is a spiritual law in terms of christian liberty and should be applied to yourself.

Let's close in Prayer