

## **“ABOUND IN HOPE.”**

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**First Christian Reformed Church**

**April 26, 2026, 10:30 AM**

**Scripture Texts: Romans 15:7-13**

**Prayer:**

**Introduction.**

You will be relieved to know this morning's text brings us to the end of Paul's long exhortation on unity and harmony in the church in Rome. Our text also ends the main body of the whole letter. After today Paul concludes the book of Romans with a variety of personal reflections, details, comments, personal concerns and requests.

While we might be weary of this long exhortation on unity, we should ask why did it matter so much to the Apostle Paul? More importantly, why did the Holy Spirit put it on Paul's heart to write so extensively about the unity of the church?

Romans 12:16 Live in harmony with one another.

Romans 13:8 Love each other.

Romans 14:1 welcome each other.

Romans 15:5-6 May God ... grant you to live in such harmony with one another, ... that together you may with one voice glorify God.

Why? Because it matters to God.

Do you remember what Jesus prayed for His disciples, for His followers before He died?

**John 17:20-21** I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, 21 that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

The unity and harmony of His church was a matter of supreme importance to Jesus. It reveals that the Father sent Him. It proves you believe in Jesus. Remember the cross.

So of course it is a matter of great sadness when we witness the miserable failure filled with so much division. Galatia, Corinth, Pergamum, Laodicea, Rome.

Remember when Paul singled out two women in his letter to the church in Philippi. “I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord” (Phil. 4:2). We don’t know what had put them at odds with each other, but it was significant enough for Paul to publicly appeal to them to strive for unity.

The world can’t help but notice when live and love and act differently from the way they do. When they see us set aside petty preferences for the sake of loving one another, they cannot help but marvel at God and the way he has transformed us from selfish, self-centered egoists into people who defer to one another and honor one another and sacrifice legitimate liberties for the sake of the spiritual welfare of one another. SS

Like our text last week, Paul starts the *what*, with a general exhortation, a call to welcome one another. Then he gives the *why*, the reason, and concludes with the *how*, with a prayer.

**Vs. 7, what, welcome one another.**

Welcome one another.

Accept one another.

Receive one another.

Embrace one another.

Open your hearts to one another. JBP

Warmly welcome one another. LB

If we love each other it will be harder to be judgmental, mean spirited.

### **Vs. 7, why, the reason.**

The Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would want them to do unto you.

The Christ Rule: Do unto others as Christ has done unto you.

As Christ has loved you, so love others.

As Christ has received you, so receive others.

As Christ continues to receive you, so continue to receive others.

The way Jesus received you, should impact how you receive others. We show we get it, we show we are true followers of Christ, when we don't push away or shun those whom Christ has welcomed and united us to.

We needed mercy and in Christ we received mercy, so now we extend mercy. Since Christ didn't despise the Jews or the Gentiles, neither should we despise anyone who Christ doesn't despise.

How did Christ receive and welcome you?

Did you have to be all cleaned up, did you have to have your act all together first?

Did you have to have all your theology straight? Did you have to have the right political views?

How did He welcome us?

With our many sins, weaknesses, shortcomings, faults, flaws, failings, prejudices, wrong opinions, blind spots, stubbornness, and on and on. He starts with where we are and then like a loving shepherd gently leads us out of sin and into paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

Scripture says we started out as enemies of God, we hated God. I know many of you grew up in Christian homes going to church. You don't remember being an enemy of God. That's true of me, I didn't have a dramatic conversion like Paul or Zaccheaus or the Philippian jailor.

But I accept what the Bible says about me as absolutely true, that however nice and normal and middle class American I was, before God saved me from my sin, I was an enemy of God, I was a sinful rebel, justly destined for judgment and deserving of eternal death.

That is what the Bible said about me before, and I believe it is true, and it is helpful to me to believe that because it kills any pride and self-righteousness in me and any feeling of superiority over other people. It helps me think about and remember what I was when Christ accepted me, welcomed me. He didn't do that because I was better than most or better than average, or ahead of the curve.

**Ephesians 2:1-5** You were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, ... carrying out the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. 4 **But God**, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.

That's us, that's what we were when Christ welcomed us and He did it all for the glory of God.

*Who am I that the highest King would welcome me?*

I was lost but He brought me in, Oh, His love for me.  
Who the Son sets free, oh, is free indeed.  
I'm a child of God, yes, I am.  
While I was a slave to sin, Jesus died for me.

Can you imagine if Jesus accepted us the way we accept people? If they are our type, if we like them or get along with them, if they like us, if they are agreeable with us and our ideas, views. Christ accepted us for the glory of God, so let us also accept one another for the glory of God.

Our unity is grounded in the truth of who Jesus is and what He has already done for us.

Welcome each other, as diverse as we are, to show and prove God's love is real in our lives and in our love for each other.

### **Vss. 8-9**

In verses 8 and 9 Paul shows just how Christ welcomed the Jews and the Gentiles.

**Vs. 8** starts with Jesus' mission to the Jews. As God had promised through the patriarchs and the prophets in the OT, so Jesus came to fulfill those promises. God is truthful and faithful.

**Galatians 4:4-5** When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law.

God sent his Son as Jew into the world to serve the Jewish people. He was born of the covenant people of God to fulfill God's covenant promises to them.

**Vs. 9** says that is not the whole story, there is more. Jesus came for the lost sheep of Israel. But not only them. He has other sheep to be brought into the fold.

In order that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy.

The Jews didn't really get this. They thought the promises of God to the Jews were exclusive, despite all the verses in the OT to the contrary. It is hard to understand how the Jews missed it. It is not like it was in the fine print or in an appendix somewhere.

Paul quotes from the OT, from the four different parts of the OT.

First, he quotes King David on his death bed in II Samuel 22. Then he quotes from the last words of Moses in the Torah, in Deuteronomy 32. Third, he quotes from the writings, from Psalm 117. And finally, he quotes from the prophets, from Isaiah 11. It is as if Paul is saying to the Jews especially, look the entire OT proclaims the truth that God will make His name and His salvation known among all the nations.

God is in the process of taking the message of salvation to the entire world, to every tribe and tongue and language and people. The Gentiles will rejoice with His people, there will only be one united church of Jews and Gentiles, a multicultural church. The church in Rome is a picture of this diverse, multicultural church worshipping Jesus. And that includes Washington and Whatcom county and Lynden.

God has scattered all of us around this community and county to be salt and light, to be a testimony and a witness through our love and good deeds to the truth about who Jesus is and what He has done.

The only hope of this broken world of ours is to be united under God's Savior Jesus Christ who sits on King David's throne in glory to rule over the entire world.

Jesus' love and acceptance trump all racial differences or discrimination or prejudice in the church of Jesus Christ. That extends beyond race and ethnicity to petty preferences and differences, to political viewpoints. This includes points of theology.

I truly hope these weeks in this part of Romans has changed your heart about your relationships with your fellow Christians at home, school, work, and church. We can discuss and disagree, but we cannot separate or not welcome and accept. What Christ accepts and welcomes and receives, we do as well. This is love and peace.

### **Vs. 13, how, prayer; God's power.**

Verse 13 is one of those rich texts. An amazing simple yet powerful prayer. It's filled with small one syllable words, yet profound. The living God offers to fill all of us with joy, peace, trust, and hope.

Paul prays for God to give us what He commands from us. If Paul thought this hope was ultimately ours to create or generate, he wouldn't bother asking God to do it. God doesn't issue commands and then stand back and watch us try to fulfill them in our own strength or will power, in reliance on our own abilities.

What God requires of us, He also requires us to depend on Him for, in reliance on His grace. Hope is the distinguishing characteristic of Christians and its existence in our hearts is no human possibility but the creation of the Holy Spirit of God. God is the source of our hope.

The word *power* is important here. We are reminded faith, hope, joy and peace are all produced in us and grow by the strength given to us by the Holy Spirit. This is what God wants for us. He longs for His children to be filled with an abundance of joy, peace, trust and hope.

Paul prays for an abiding joy that no amount of family discord or disagreement or petty differences can undermine. Paul prays for the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit to overcome turmoil or prejudice or judgment or lack of love. Paul prays that the only thing that flows from our hearts is the love Christ has already given us in His acceptance of us.

**I Peter 1:3** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to *a living hope* through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

How is your hope? Is it living, is it dead, is it on life-support? Are you weary, exhausted spiritually, mentally, emotionally, physically? Are on the verge of despair because nothing you can do seems awaken hope in your heart? You are in precisely the condition where God can perform His most glorious work in you. “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). And please notice, with God there is no meagerness or miserliness, He fills to an overflowing abundance.

How? Pray, ask, seek, knock. Remember the cross, remember the empty tomb, remember His warm welcome and embrace. He is for you. You are a child of God, yes, you are.

### **Implications and application.**

One churches squabbles over food and meat and days on a calendar, opens an opportunity for Paul to call us all to live together in love and unity, in Christ, because of Christ.

Paul calls us not to look down on each other or sit in judgment on each other because of how we have been accepted and welcomed and embraced by Jesus. To be a people who don't live any longer to please only themselves but to please others.

We are an incompatible people showing to the world what true love and unity looks like, what a heart changing grace of God looks like. By our love and unity we show that God is real and the Gospel is true.

Our love and unity in Christ prove God is doing what He promised He would do by bringing together under Christ people from all over this broken world.

Don't miss the point of all of this. Why has God done what He has done? Why did He save the Jews? Why did He save the Gentiles? Why did He give us His Spirit of unity and love?

**Romans 15:9** In order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.

Pray to the God of hope that he will pour out his Holy Spirit and enable to be filled with joy and peace so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope, to the glory of God, that together we may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.