

I. Introduction

- A. The song we just sang written some time ago by a guy named King David (**Psa 57:9-11**)
1. David begins with lament' he is at his wits end and cries out for mercy (**57:1-2**)
 - a. He is beset by enemies who surround and hound him, and he needs God to save
 - b. He trusts that God will do just that, and so he praise God among the nations
 2. That's where I want to focus; through the OT, Israel has this mission "*to the nations*"
 - a. If Israel followed God's Law, it would show His wisdom to the nations (**Deut 4:6**)
 - b. Israel's would make God's righteousness known to the nations (**Psa 98:2**)
 - c. Israel's Messiah would bring God's justice to the nations (**Isa 42:1**)
 - d. Israel was to be used by God to become a light to the nations (**Isa 49:6**)
 3. Who are the nations? Hebrew word in these texts is "goy," the word for "*Gentiles*"
 - a. The word originally just meant "*people*," but came to mean "*non-Jewish*" *people*"
 - b. Anyone who isn't Amish is called "*English*" by Amish. *Even if they're Chinese!*
 - c. And anyone who isn't Jewish is "goy" or Gentile. So either you're in or you're out!
- B. Today we continue our study this morning of Unashamed and the Book of Romans
1. What made the church at Rome interesting was that it had two groups—in and out
 - a. Problem: Couldn't tell which side was IN and which side was OUT, right or wrong
 - b. Jews thought they were a little holier-than-thou; Romans had a little but bluer-blood
 - c. What Paul is doing in Romans is showing they are all a royal mess in need of grace
 2. In **Romans 14**, Paul got down to brass tacks—eating meats and observing days
 - a. These are some of the issues that Jewish/Gentiles Christians can't see alike
 - b. He doesn't tell them what to think but how live with those they disagree with
 3. Paul sums up with some "*among the nations*" OT texts like we saw earlier (**15:8-9**)
 - a. He sees Jesus as a servant of both the Jews (**15:8**) and of Gentiles (**15:9**)
 - 1) These quotes illustrate God's interest in including Gentile w/ Jews (**15:10-11**)
 - 2) That is Paul's life; he identifies himself as God's minister to Gentiles (**15:16**)
 - b. But before the church could be the light to nations, they had to live that light
 4. Church had to live in unity themselves to fulfill their mission to be God's light
- C. Let's look at what Paul says living in peace and unity (**Reading: Romans 15:1-7**)

II. Make Us One: What We Must Do

- A. Two weeks ago, we looked at how to treat one another as Christians when we disagree
1. **Starting Point:** “*Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment*” (**14:1**)
 - a. We can’t always have a meeting of minds; we must always have a meeting of hearts!
 - b. We don’t have to agree on every issue; indeed, we CANNOT agree on every issue
 - c. But there is a “*greatest command*, right? There’s one virtue above others (**Col 3:14**)
 2. Last time, we looked at some things Paul meant by “*accept one another*” in **Rom 14**
 - a. **First**, it means we’ll not look down on those who disagree with us (**Rom 14:3**)
 - b. **Second**, it means that we will refuse to judge the motives of others (**Rom 14:6**)
 - c. **Third**, we’ll give up control or arguing others into submission (**Rom 14:22**)
 - d. **Fourth**, it means we’ll love each other more than we love winning (**Rom 14:15**)
- B. In **Romans 15**, Paul continues to call us to unity despite obvious differences (**Rom 15:1**)
1. He begins here by insisting the strong **OUGHT** to bear with the failings of weak
 - a. This isn’t “*ought*” as in “*I ought to exercise more*” but we all know that I won’t
 - b. The word Paul uses here literally is “*to be in debt.*” He says we have **obligation**
 - 1) It’s the word the unmerciful uses, “*pay me what you OWE me*” (**Matt 18:28**).
 - 2) The same word Paul used earlier, “*no DEBT remain outstanding*” (**Rom 13:8**)
 - c. Have a beef with someone over an issue and think they’re an idiot? *You owe them!*
 2. Our small group last week asked if “*failings*” is too pejorative or condescending here
 - a. We wondered if KJV’s “*infirmities*” is better. Can’t help it if you have infirmity
 - b. Point: the “*weak*” here isn’t someone who is rebellious or stubborn but powerless
 - 1) This second word Paul uses here literally means “*incapable or powerless*”
 - 2) It is the same word used for a crippled man he healed at Lustra (**Acts 14:8**)
 - c. Jew who was saw kosher food restrictions was powerless not to (**Rom 14:14**)
 - 1) Their idea of piety was so wrapped up food, they couldn’t see it any other way
 - 2) Growth and time might change them— arguing and browbeating would not!
 3. If we’d only MATCH our METAPHOR! We call the church a “family.” Act like it!
 - a. Imagine a young family just getting a start—dad, mom and a young baby, OK?
 - 1) Dad brings home the bacon, at least, a lot of it. Family’s on the street w/o him.
 - 2) Mom is practical and emotional hub of family; all is really lost without her.
 - b. Baby is financial and time drain... and gets all the attention! Why? *She needs it!*

- C. That's how it's supposed to be in a family... and in the church as well (**Rom 15:2-3**)
1. We must decide if we're going to "please ourselves" (**15:1**) or "please others" (**15:2**)
 - a. Example of Jesus is that he pleased us, not himself, all the way to the cross (**15:3**)
 - b. It is the cross that calls us to offer ourselves as living sacrifices to God and others
 - 1) Sometimes we must set aside what we want for the good of others (**Phil 2:3-4**)
 - 2) We are called to do this by the cross—the cross always compels us (**Phil 2:5ff**)
 - c. So who is it that we will please? Ourselves? Others? *What pleases God?*
 2. Ricky Nelson's classic song "Garden Party" focuses on expectations of others
But then it's all right now, I learned my lesson well, you see, you can't please everyone, so you got to please yourself
 - a. He's right; you really can't please everyone; you really would go crazy trying to!
 - b. This big fact is illustrated all time in many little ways at church, right?
 - 1) **Thermostat:** Too hot or cold. Can't please everyone... *A dummy thermostat?*
 - 2) **Sound Board:** It's always too loud or not loud enough or the balance is off
 - a) People are always telling them "Turn it up" or "Turn it down" or "It needs or bass"
 - b) You can't please everyone. But you can wear headphone so you can't hear anyone!
 3. If Rick Nelson wrote Christian music, "Can't please everyone, so gotta please God"
 - a. Over and over again, God tells us that we can't have our own way all the time
 - b. To be like Jesus, we must seek the good of others, and not ourselves (**1 Cor 10:24**)

III. Make Us One: Three Steps to Unity

- A. **First**, It will take TIME. (**Rom 15:4a**, ESV). This process does not happen over night
1. Paul begins by pointing us to scripture, "whatever was written in former days..."
 - a. These stories we read from the Bible are there for a reason. They teach us things
 - b. We just finished looking at the strange story of Queen Esther on Wednesdays
 - 1) Fate of Jews in hands of a teen sex-trafficking victim... and God seemed silent!
 - 2) In series of coincidences, salvation just happens! *Supposed to learn from that!*
 2. Paul suggests accepting one another is going to take "endurance" or "patience" (KJV)
 - a. Two NT words are traditionally translated in our English Bibles as "patience."
 - 1) μακροθυμία ("long-suffering") is self-restraint that refuses to act in retaliation
 - 2) ὑπομονή ("endure") is refusing to give up (people) or give in (circumstance)
 - b. If we're to be the true church God calls us to be, it will take patience and endurance
 - c. God always comes through, Read the Bible and just hand on to brothers and sisters!

- B. **Second**, It will also take SCRIPTURE (**Rom 14:4b**, NLT). We must rely on the Bible
1. Remember, the context here, “*Such things were written in the Scriptures long ago*”
 - a. Paul says that the point of Bible is to give us encouragement as we live together
 - b. Those stories don’t just teach us; they encourage us to keep on living the life of faith
 2. Remember the context of the church at Rome; they are fighting over all these issues
 - a. Remember past issues that we have fought over (*far sillier than ham sandwich*)
 - b. What does the Bible become when we’re in the Bible of a debate over an issue
 - 1) Bible study is combing the text for points to prop up already defined positions
 - 2) You know looking for what God says; you looking to tell God what you say!
 - c. **Irony**: Verse that says, “*search the scriptures,*” people are doing it wrong (**Jn 5:39**)
- C. **Third**, mostly, it will take God. (**Rom 15:5-7**, ESV) It’s not up to us; it’s up to God!
1. **Key**: God creates unity through Christ; He gives us the ability to live in harmony
 - a. We don’t have to thrash around until we come to consensus or unanimity of belief
 - b. We don’t have to be smart enough to get all our theological ducks in a row first
 - c. We don’t have to agree every theological/doctrinal issue coming down the pike
 2. We must love God enough and each other enough love, and that can be enough
 - a. Point in **Rom 14** is that attitudes are more important than position on some issues
 - b. Yeah, but the issue in **Rom 14** was just silly— *eating meats and observing days*
 - 1) Central issue was seriously Christian must be in avoiding idols. *Not silly at all.*
 - 2) Acts warns of meats and idols (**Acts 15:29**). John’s final warning (**1 Jn 5:21**)
 - c. How do we know that issues that we fight over are serious while theirs were silly?
 3. We do know that our prime directive is to love God and to love one another.
 - a. We know Jesus that said the world would know we’re His disciples by our love
 - b. We know that Jesus prayed right before his death that his disciples would be one
 - c. Paul said this right after the section on unity we saw earlier in Philippians (**2:14-15**)
- D. What confuses the world about the church? *Different doctrines or denominations?*
1. I don’t think that confuses people too much. *Burger King and “Have it your way.”*
 - a. People get variety. They get differences in culture and background and language.
 - b. What **DOES** confuse is why we’re so bad at doing the #1 thing Jesus preached.
 - c. *How can those who follow the loving Christ be so unloving toward one another?*
 2. May the power of God’s Spirit fill this church with power and make us one (**15:13**)