

PP The Heart of a Family

Part 2 Harmony, Romans 15:1-7

1/15-16/2022

What makes a family great, worth spending enormous effort toward?

Where last week we saw it was a willingness to forgive, today it is the attitude of harmony

*Harmony is the common cause that motivates very different people to be together

In music, there cannot be harmony when everyone is singing the same note

It occurs when different notes are played at the same time, centered around a main melody

A family will be very dull if everyone is always the same

And while differences can add to the richness of a family, they can also create *disharmony* if not centered on the melody

We are about to see 3 things: *What we must do if we are to have harmony; The example that should motivate us to stay in harmony; and The power available to help us*

PP 1-What we must do if we are to have harmony

“We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves.” 15:1

Romans 14:1 tells us who the *weak* are... ***‘the one who is weak in faith’*** and the strong one whose faith has had time to mature, and they should not ***‘quarrel over opinions’***

Rupertus Meldenius *“In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; in all things, charity.”*

The churches in Rome were made up of Jews and Gentiles, slaves and freedmen, rich and poor, strong and weak, and with these groups came differences that produced tensions

The *weak* were immature believers who insisted that there were clean and unclean foods (**14:2**)

They insisted that the Saturday Sabbath still needed to be observed (**14:5**)

The weak were the undeveloped in faith, the strong were the mature in faith, but both groups were *passing judgment* on the other and you see this in **14:3, 4, 10, 13, and 22**

One group looked down on the other for their legalism, and the other group looked down on the other for their liberal ways

The weak would say of the strong, what sinners you are, using your freedom for evil

The strong were saying of the weak, your opinion is ridiculous, get over it

So Paul says to both groups, ***‘decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother’ (14:13)*** or else, ***‘you are no longer walking in love’ (14:15)***

Do you see now why Paul begins chapter 15 the way he did...as he is explaining how to have harmony in the church?

If you are mature in your faith, you have an ***‘obligation to bear with the failings of the weak’ 1***

The spiritually strong owe it to the weak to be patient and bear with their struggles

Otherwise we will live as if the spiritually weak owe it to us...we will ***‘please ourselves’***

He writes that every Christian, strong or weak, should ***‘please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.’ 15:2***

A wife might make an elaborate dinner for her husband and ask him if he is *pleased*, satisfied?

Or the sight of that green, lush valley is *pleasing* to the eyes

The word means something that you find agreeable and it stirs up the emotions

If we are to enjoy harmony in the church, we must live in a way that others find pleasing, but not as *‘people-pleasers’*

A people pleaser, no matter how they try to pretend otherwise, lives primarily for their own good, which will inevitably create disharmony
 Does your sense of value depend on the approval of others, keeping you from saying what you really want to say, what the person really needs to hear?
 People pleasers are about their good, their self-worth, their approval being built up
 Paul has something else in mind: the other person's good!
 Christian, imagine your family made up of members who each live for the good of others?
 Imagine your church family the same, where we will not pass judgment on each other, but live as if we owe a debt of love to the other to help them grow in their faith!
 We must live this way if we are to have harmony, and we have a great example

PP 2-The example that should motivate us to stay in harmony

There are some scholars who believe that the early church in Rome failed terribly
 Rivalry was so fierce, they say, that some in the church turned in the names of their Christian opponents as traitors to Rome, leading to their martyrdom
 The church in Galatia was ravaged by legalism, the church in Corinth divided by issues like incest, while the church in Pergamum was full of ungodly marriages
 A 2017 Lifeway Research survey showed that 66% of 23-30 year olds said they stopped attending church on a regular basis for at least a year after turning 18
 Among their top reasons were divisive, judgmental church members
 Let's be honest, Christians can treat Christians terribly, I've seen it often!
 But the truth is, we have the power to treat each other well, better than the world can
 We have the power of God in us to ***bear with the failings of the weak***, instead of judging them
 We have the Spirit of Christ in us to have different ***opinions***, yet treat each other with kindness and dignity and, well, love
 And we have the greatest example to ever live, in the spiritually strongest Person to ever live
"For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, 'The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.'" Romans 15:3-4
 Jesus said, **PP** ***"I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will but the will of Him who sent Me."*** John 6:38
PP ***"I always do the things that are pleasing to Him."*** John 8:29
 The eye of Christ was never first and foremost on Himself, but on His Father and others
 He lived for the sake of others
PP ***"For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."*** Mark 10:45
 Jesus alone has ever lived a perfect, selfless life,

Do you see, we are to live like Him, in harmony with each other, agreeable, helping each other for their good?
 If you are truly listening, you must now be sensing, you are in deep trouble!
 You and I cannot live like this, we seem irresistibly drawn to love ourselves more than others
 Christians may be new creations, but we still have this old impulse of desire that opposes God
 Don't you ever cry out with Paul, **PP** ***"Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"*** Romans 7:24
 All disharmony occurs when the parts will not play to the melody, but what is that melody, and

how do we get tuned to it?

PP 3-The power available to help us

The power of the gospel is such that it transforms us from the inside out and Paul shows us two ways that God is doing exactly that

“For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”
Romans 15:4

PP i. The power of God’s Word

Remember, Paul is driving to the point...God is helping us be in harmony with each other

The strong must learn to bear with the limited understandings of the weak, and the weak must learn to bear with the settled beliefs of the strong, who they think are in error

In simple words, Christians must learn to get along with each other

Though we cannot do this in our own power, God’s power can, and He does through His Word

God’s Word changes us, renewing our minds, changing the way we see each other

The Old Testament was written and preserved to give hope to future generations

Here is what hope is: **PP** *Faith for your future because you are convinced that the God Who has never let you down, never will*

As you read and study God’s Word, you will grow in your knowledge of God’s love, and that love will be poured into your hearts to overflow to one another

If that is how God worked in past generations, He will do the same in our own

PP ii. The power of God’s grace

“May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Romans 15:5-6

The word **‘grant’** means *give*, and here we see the ongoing, unearned grace of God that richly flows in us helping us to endure those irritating flaws and differences in each other

Friends, as you come to God’s written Word, the Living Word, Jesus, will come to you in power

His life pours into your life, His love becomes your love, His patience becomes yours

He enables us to **‘live in such harmony’**, where believers’ hearts are for each other with an attitude for each other, a and a desire ultimately for the same thing

Early on in our marriage Denise and I learned what I have since discovered many couples learn, don’t get in the car to go to eat until you agree where to go for dinner

I don’t want the burden/risk to decide, so I tell her to pick, and she doesn’t want the burden/risk so she tells me to pick, meanwhile the car is running and we aren’t going anywhere

The goal is to enjoy time together, the restaurant isn’t the ultimate destination, we are

You see, our differing opinions will not lead to disharmony when our ultimate goal is to **‘with one voice glorify’** God

This is the melody that together we tune ourselves to...but what does it mean to **‘glorify God’**?

You may have heard of doxing someone, uncovering and exposing someone’s personal info

Well, to glorify God means to uncover and reveal His perfection and excellent attributes

Harmony in the family, whether it is your own or our church family, shows everyone how great

and worthy of praise is our God that can enable such different people to love each other
So Paul leaves us with a final instruction in our passage: ***“welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.” 15:7***

We are to bring each other into our circle of friends, and the Greek tense is a command do it continually

Christian, make this the way you live, giving a warm welcome no matter who it is, treating them as friends even though you may be different from one another

It is when we bear with one another, living in harmony with each other, with an attitude of welcoming and accepting that the melody of God’s glory will be heard and seen

Pray