

One Another – Accept

Text : Romans 14: 1 – 15: 7

INTRODUCTION :

A. In your whole life, where have you felt most secure ?

1. If you grew up in a normal family, it was in your mother's arms and in your family.
2. Even when you felt the whole world was against you, your family was there for you.
3. When one matures and gets on with life, he seeks to build a new nest of security.
 - a. This is the definition of a successful marriage. (*Only the fortunate find it.*)
 - b. As our culture becomes increasingly self-centered, secure relationships also become increasingly rare.

B. In the absence of security, people “mask.”

1. Masking is the process of concealing one's true self (*true feelings*) from others.
2. Real communication cannot occur between people who are masking.
 - a. Marriages fail when one or both parties continues masking.
 - b. It is a major problem in business communication and contract negotiation.
3. In a relationship, the masked person tries to be what he perceives the other wants to see or what he wants the other to see.
 - a. For example, we dress to present the image that we believe others want to see.
 - b. Women wear uncomfortable shoes and men wear ties to present an image.

C. The church is a place where no one should have to fear rejection by the group.

1. God specifically designed it to be a place where everyone feels accepted.
2. It should be a place where we all feel comfortable to be who we really are.
3. If we have to pretend, to mask, to pose, the church is not yet what it should be.

D. The church is the place where Christians deal with their spiritual problems.

1. No one is without sin so every one of us deals with weaknesses. (*need repentance*)
2. We all deal with different weaknesses so we are able to support each other.
3. The church functions as the hospital where Christians come to be healed from sin.
4. If we cannot feel comfortable to reveal our weaknesses to each other, we have no place to go to be healed.
5. When we all come into the assembly pretending to be better than we are, we discourage others from seeking the spiritual reinforcement that we all need.

E. None of us fully understands all of the teachings of the scriptures.

1. When we drift into “group think” we collectively lose the ability to grow.
2. The ability to debate ideas is a great way to foster growth.
 - a. **Prov. 27: 17 – Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.**
 - b. BUT, if one Christian fears the rejection of another, the sharpening cannot occur.

Therefore, the concept of acceptance is very important for us to understand.

I. The context of the book of Romans.**A. Paul was writing to a church that he had never visited. (Rom. 1: 9-10)**

1. Paul received reports of their character and conduct. (**Rom. 1: 8**)
2. Paul knew several people in the congregation. (**Rom. 16: 3-16**)
3. Paul had family members in the congregation at Rome. (**Rom. 16:13 .. mom/bro**)

B. It was a young church.

1. It had never been visited by an Apostle. (**Rom. 1: 11 .. impart some gift**)
(*Obviously, Peter had not been there to minister to them as some legends profess.*)
2. They were still adjusting to the blending of cultures.
 - a. Those converted from the Jewish heritage wanted to bring in elements of Judaism.
 - b. Those from the various gentile heritages refused to be bound by Jewish customs.

C. Rome was a cosmopolitan city, but the Jews were an exclusive people.

1. For centuries they had been instructed to keep themselves separated from gentiles.
2. In Ezra 10 those who had married foreign wives in exile were required to divorce.
3. The Jews would have no dealings with non-Jews.
 - a. In John 4 the Samaritan woman was surprised that Jesus would even speak to her.
 - b. The “limited commission” in Matt 10, Jesus told the Apostles to go only to Jews.
 - c. In Acts 10, Peter saw the vision before being sent to the house of Cornelius.
 - d. When Peter went back to Jerusalem, the Jewish Christians had to be persuaded.

D. This is the kind of environment which our text addresses.

1. There are legitimate doctrinal differences between some of the brethren.
2. Some are convinced that certain holidays must be observed to honor God.
3. Others understood that Christians do not have dietary restrictions or holidays.
4. **The weak thought themselves to be strong and the strong were unyielding.**

II. Our text gives us a very special rule.

A. This is a command that must be obeyed.

1. **Rom. 15: 7** – Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.
2. **Rom. 14: 1** – Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.

B. “Accept” translates the word “*proslambano*.”

1. It means : To grant access to one’s heart, to receive into friendship, to welcome as into one’s home
2. It is in the present imperative tense.
 - a. It’s a command.
 - b. It is to be done both now and continuing into the future.
3. It’s used only four times in the New Testament.
 - a. Rom. 14: 1, 3
 - b. Rom. 15: 7
 - c. Philemon 17

C. This is one of our strengths; but even so it’s not always practiced as consistently as we would like. (cf. – **I Thes. 4: 9-10** .. love more ; **5: 11** .. encourage)

1. Like justice, Christian love is supposed to be blind.
James 2: 1-4 My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. ² For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, ³ and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, “You sit here in a good place,” and you say to the poor man, “You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,” ⁴ have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives?
2. As long as we are all pretty much the same we have little difficulty treating each other the same, but when one is very different when one is different, it’s more challenging.
3. Diversity is always challenging whether it be in appearance or perspective.
 - a. We are a small town so most local folks are rather the same.
 - b. BUT, people from as close as fifty miles away in a large city don’t fit right in.
4. Cliques form in the normal course of a congregation’s history.
 - a. People who have been together for a long time form closer bounds. (*okay*)
 - *b. We must make a special effort to include everyone in our circle. (*exclusion = sin*)

III. Acceptance is given on the basis of being siblings in the family of God. (*not merit*)**A. Paul's book to the Romans is written to Christians, i.e., those in God's family.**

1. **Rom. 1: 5-7** ... we have received grace and apostleship to bring about *the* obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake, **6** among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; **7** to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: ...
2. It was not instructions on how to BE saved, but how saved people are to live.

B. Paul is cautioning Christians NOT to make acceptance based on agreement.

1. These brethren had disagreements in matters they considered doctrinally important.
 - a. Lifestyle issues. (*Special diets*)
 - b. The way they worshipped. (*Special days*)
2. The Apostle did not tell them that they all had to agree.
 - a. They were told to accept each other.
 - b. They were told they could not judge the other's opinions. (*classify as inferior*)

C. The only time we'd all agree is if we were to all stop growing at the same time.

1. We are never going to agree on many things because we are all at different levels.
 - a. Years of experience in the church does not make one more mature in the faith.
 - b. Many have the first year's experience over and over many times. ... *don't study*.
 - c. Rather than study many just parrot what they've been told so they don't grow.
2. As one grows he'll even come to disagree with himself and struggle with change.
 - a. Having struggled with change gives one the ability to understand the process.
 - b. Understanding amplifies our ability to accept others and help them along the way.
3. There are some things about which we will never agree and that's okay.
 - a. The indwelling and work of the Holy Spirit.
 - b. End of time things.

D. The point is .. we don't have to agree on everything in order to accept each other.

1. Married couples have things about which they disagree, but love overcomes them.
2. Clearly, one can love someone that he knows disapproves of his opinion.
3. Likewise one can love another that he thinks is totally wrong about some things.
4. Acceptance is not to "put up with" or to grant provisional acceptance.

IV. We must distinguish both between opinions and commands ... and between essentials and non-essentials. (*Not everything is Heaven or Hell*)

A. Jesus established the principle of some things being more important than others.

1. **Matt. 23: 23-24** Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. ²⁴ You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!
2. He did not say any were not important, but that some were more important. (Lk 12)
3. “We need to make sure we are keeping em-**pha**-sis the right syl-**la**-ble.”

B. In dealing with this same principle, the Apostles (H.S.) established that some doctrines are essential and some are not. (*Can be wrong on some and go to Heaven*)

1. In Acts 15, the Apostle met to discuss divisions about the law.
2. In their meeting they allowed “**much debate**” about the subject. (**Acts 15: 7**)
3. By the direction of the Holy Spirit the impact is minimized. The Apostle wrote a letter binding only a few “**essential**” elements of the Law on us. (**Acts 15: 28**)

C. Some things are absolutely essential that we believe and agree on.

1. Faith in the gospel. (*Virgin birth, sinless life, Vicarious Death, Resurrection*)
2. Obedience to the gospel. (**Obey from the heart that form of teaching ... Rom. 6: 17**)

D. Christians must not accept false teachings about essential doctrines.

1. **Gal. 1: 8** – But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!
2. II Pet 3: 16 says that people who rest the scriptures do so to their own destruction.

V. Christians accept each other because they seek to glorify God.

A. **Rom. 15: 7** – Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.

1. When Christ redeemed us it brought glory to God.
2. When we accept each other, we bring glory to God.

B. Augustine : One of the early Christian fathers wrote :

Nothing proves the spiritual character of a man as the way in which he deals with the sin of his fellowman, when he lay the stress on his redemption rather than on his reproach, on his welfare rather than on his reproof.

C. The world is watching the way we deal with each other and it reflects on God.

1. **John 13: 35** – **By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another**
2. We are the candle that Jesus uses to illumine the world. **Matt. 5: 14-16**
3. When we accept our brethren we reflect the character of the Christ dwelling in us.

CONCLUSION :**A. By and large, we're an accepting congregation, but we can build on our strength.**

1. It is apparent that we don't feel as comfortable to remove our masks as we should.
2. The proof of this is demonstrated in the fact that we don't practice **James 5: 16** : **Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed.** (cf. – **I Cor. 11: 30** ... *spiritually sick*)

B. We must accept our defective brethren because if we wait until our brethren are faultless, we'll have little fellowship this side of Heaven.

1. An wise old preacher once said :
*To live with the saints above that will be glory,
But to live with the saints her below, now that another story.*
2. As the family of God, we owe acceptance to all our brethren.
 - a. They don't have to earn it. (*Like Jesus we accept on the basis of GRACE.*)
 - b. They don't have to agree with us to get it.
 - c. *It's a measure of our heart, not theirs.*
3. We display our attitude toward God by the way we treat His children.

C. What is your attitude toward God ? Have you accepted Him.

1. Have you humbled yourself before Him ?
2. On the day that every knee bows before Him,
you'll be asking him to accept you.
3. What is your relationship with God's family ?
Is it the same as God's attitude ?

INVITATION :

Lesson Text :**Romans 14: 1 – 15: 7**

1 Now accept the one who is weak in faith, *but not for the purpose of* passing judgment on his opinions. **2** One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables *only*. **3** The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him.

4 Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

5 One person regards one day above another, another regards every day *alike*. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind. **6** He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. **7** For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; **8** for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. **9** For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

10 But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. **11** For it is written, "AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD."

12 So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.

13 Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way. **14** I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. **15** For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died. **16** Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil; **17** for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. **18** For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. **19** So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another. **20** Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense. **21** It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or *to do anything* by which your brother stumbles. **22** The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. **23** But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because *his eating* is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.

Chapter 15

1 Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not *just* please ourselves. **2** Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification. **3** For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "THE REPROACHES OF THOSE WHO REPROACHED YOU FELL ON ME." **4** For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. **5** Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, **6** so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. **7** Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.