

Christian Hope and Glorious Unity

Romans 15:5-7

As we return to Romans 15, we are returning to the closing note of hope from verse 4.

Hope sings to us believers, says Spurgeon. It has a much wider role in us than we imagine and serves a wide field including how to get along as saints.

Hope arises not from us but from the Lord – the God of hope in verse 13. He gives by the Scriptures, the exceedingly great and precious promises big with hope – v. 4. Now hope is a gift, given by the Trinity in 5ff.

Paul's main aim is the full glory of God for all God's people together.

The differences b/t weak and strong believers, Jewish or Gentile Christians, are secondary to the larger calling of glorifying the Lord.

All believers are seated at the great table of hope and assurance in Christ. One has said of assurance is having heaven before heaven, or having two heavens!

What a setting – to attain hope! You cannot miss the Trinity here – the God of all hope is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God of promise. And in verse 13 – “So that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit”!

He seats you at the Father's table, in the seat of the Son Jesus – enthroned with him. The full plates at this feast come from the full cupboard of King Jesus and His attainments as your Savior.

Faith is your fork and spoon – faith in Jesus according to the Bible – it is Jesus my Savior, this book is my Book, from my Father’s heart, and from his lips to me!

Do you see how you must deal with a triune God by faith and trust in Him? You must deal with the living God with a living faith if you would have a living hope.

No living hope without the living Word received by a living faith!

No living hope without the resurrected One who receives all who call upon Him in faith.

And no living hope without God’s Comforter – the Holy Spirit – abiding in you, filling to overflowing your heart and mind, your soul and life. “I Believe in the Holy Spirit” is our confession!

How rich – have you not found it so – when you can give your heart away to God for safekeeping? How filled you are? You have used the fork and spoon of faith!

That faith, that trust, includes an element of self-surrender, doesn’t it? You come emptied to this plate and table. You give up on selfishness, on trying to feed yourself on the things of this world.

Believing – trusting God the Spirit to come into your life more and more, accompanied with hope, much hope, abundant and strong hope.

Faith and hope go hand in hand then

If faith is the foundation of hope, and hope the nourisher of faith; then joy is your sparkling water and wine; and peace is your bread and butter. “Filled with all joy and peace in believing”!

These do not need any endorsement, do they? Who does not want joy, delight, happiness? The whole earth is bent on this. Who does not long for, breath after peace?

These are the daily refreshments of Christians.

Ours is no joyless, bloodless, heartless religion, is it? It is the jubilee of the soul! Hope anchored in heaven. The peace of God that surpasses understanding. Joy unspeakable and full of glory!

All joy and peace in Christ who has brought a full rainbow of God's smiles on us, for time and eternity; that which rescues us from the flood – not the flood of Noah, which was only a type, but an eternal lake and drowning in fire.

This is no false rainbow which men and women might boast in a false and empty peace. A false peace excuses our sins, makes pillows of them.

But the gospel of the true God says “Reconciled!” No more wrath in Him, no sins on us, for Jesus died, has paid the price in full and gives us his own righteousness as our title to his heaven!

He sees no sin! Amen!

He sees a righteousness of God! Amen and Amen!

And now comes the point, the punch of the passage:

You are not alone at this table. You are not dining on your own. Next to you Jewish believer is a Gentile. Next to you stronger brother is a weaker brother. Across from you are people of different color, different customs, different languages, different backgrounds, and on

and on it goes. Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight!

And see how they all look in the same way of hope. They all look to the chief end of man which is the glory of God and enjoyment of Him!

For all their differences they are ultimately of one accord, one and unified in certain ways:

1. Of the same mind – 5
2. Of one voice – 6
3. Accepting of one another – 7

Back in chapter 12 brotherly love is found in this one body with many members; one body in Christ, and members of one another.

Here he speaks in verse 6 of their likeness to each other – one accord, or one mind.

To be of one mind, to be of one voice, to be of one acceptance, warmly, heartily.

Christians share one mind in Christ: ‘but you have the mind of Christ’. “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus...”

All those who have Jesus as their Head, have one another as fellow members of one body. Jesus does not have two bodies, or twelve churches. This communion all Christians have transcends national and denominational lines.

And what they are united in is the truth of the gospel. It is from there that they need to work out their salvation and understanding in how to fully live the Christian life.

So believers fulfill this as they behold the head, Jesus. This is that by which the body is not merely unified but unified in salvation.

He who prayed that we might all be one, prayed in the same breath that we would be sanctified by the truth; His word is truth!

So all efforts at unifying under lesser things than the Word of God are poor and ugly efforts at removing the Bible and Christ.

Many want a God without wrath who brings men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministry of a Christ without a cross.

Now the confession of the church is important. Paul says in the next breath, with one mouth, with one voice, with one confession.

The Christian faith is a public faith. It is not spirituality a loner, inward, private and unseeable. We believe in our hearts but confess with our mouths.

We confess Him, we pray to Him, we praise Him, we sing to Him – and our song is to be a harmony in the truth of God.

Thirdly then is the bond of fellowship; the communion being fostered.

The “we” throughout these verses must not be missed –

- That **we** might have hope – 4
- Not just the same mind, but same mind **with** one another – 5
- With **one** heart you may with **one** voice – 6
- All this in acceptance of one another – 7

The communion of the saints is both a fact and a duty.

You are by definition united to all the saints in heaven above and on earth below. It is a fact; you cannot have Christ as your Savior without being engrafted into his one, mystical body.

Being baptized into the triune God's name, you share that name with other believers. You are made no less than one family of God.

But that fellowship as a fact, needs to be fostered, developed and lived out. This is where the invisible church – the mystical body of Christ – must show itself visibly. True faith expresses itself outwardly. The invisible church becomes the visible church. If God is your Father, then the church becomes your mother.

The key to developing this relationship is accepting one another. We are instructed together, have the mind of Christ together, speak as one together, in the acceptance of one another, together.

Paul began back in 14:1 – Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not so as to pass judgment on his opinions.

Paul now tells us that the model for how we are to accept each other, is how Christ accepted us! It is a matter of gospel grace!

I will tell you that accepting fellow believers based on your own criteria, putting out the welcome mat only so far as it is comfortable to you, limits you and does harm to the body of Christ.

How we need to see one another as in union with Christ. Because Christ accepted them, how can I not? Has Christ accepted me with all my sins and transgressions, and will I turn and demand some set of rules or hoops to jump through before I will show love to my believing neighbor? Do I not love the Lord in loving his children?

We hope the Father sees us in Christ, in His righteousness, under his blood – why will we not see one another in that way?

One more thing and we are done. And this is not a little matter. This should not be a bare minimum. A putting up with one another to the glory of God!

There is to be a believing, hope-filled, joyful and peace-loving quality, right?

Notice how Paul adds this feature – the parallel of glory in 6 and 7.

7 says Christ accepted you to the glory of God; He seated you at this feast, a banquet of love, to the honor and name of His Father and our Father!

Are there any more tremendous words in all the Bible than these?

²² "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; ²³ I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. ²⁴ "Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. (Joh 17:22-24 NAU)

Now in turn, you glorify God in verse 6. You accept one another to the glory of God, with one accord, and together glorify the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

If you, in hope, have a keen eye to the glory of God to eternity, you see the vital importance of those seated around this table with you –

your fellow believers. Paul said before: “Not one of us lives for himself and no one dies for himself – if **we** live, **we** live for the Lord; if **we** die, **we** die for the Lord; whether **WE** live or die, **WE** are the Lord’s!

What is it that comes between you and the church? You and your fellow member in Christ? Let there be no divisions in the body! Be at peace with all.

If Christ can knock down the dividing wall between Jew and Gentile, no wall should come up within the church of gospel believers.

As we close, how will things look when you enter glory?

Could this be put on the headstone of your grave? Here lies so and so; the God of all hope filled him or her with all joy and peace in believing while here below, so as to abound in shining hope by the power of the Holy Spirit?

Or would it be the opposite?

Here lies so and so; a stranger to the God of hope, empty and full of discouragements and fears all his or her days, unhappy and tossed around in unbelief, so as to abound in despair and stretches of hopelessness, grieving the Holy Spirit and rejecting his help?

What does a perishing world see in you?