

THE ROMAN REVEALING
Theme: The Reign of Righteousness
From the Sermon Notebook of Dr. Doyce H. Nolan

SUBJECT: THE TOLERANT CHRISTIAN
SCRIPTURE: ROMANS 15:1-7

Introduction

Paul has been talking about how we should relate to the believers around us. We have learned that, as believers, we are to love one another, help one another and accept one another. This section serves as the climax of those thoughts. Here, we learn that we are to have a spirit of toleration toward our brothers and sisters in Christ.

We have to acknowledge the fact that we are all different. We are from different places, with different backgrounds and different types of upbringing. If we aren't careful, we can allow the differences we have become a problem in the fellowship. We can look at a brother or sister who has some different ideas than we do and we can decide that we just won't fellowship with them.

However, it is our differences that make the church possible. The fact that we are different allows the church to be a place where unique personalities meet and produce a powerful fellowship that can be found no where else in the world.

When we allow the Spirit of the Lord to operate in the church, we will love, respect and tolerate one another and produce a harmony that the world cannot duplicate.

This message is about an attitude within the church that accepts the personal differences of our brother or sister in Christ. An attitude that loves them just like they are, even when we disagree, or even when they are wrong! We might not be able to support their view, but we can still practice love for them!

These verses will teach us three major factors in how we are to live one with another..

1. THE DUTY OF TOLERANCE (1-2).
2. THE DEMONSTRATION OF TOLERANCE (3-4).
3. THE DELIGHT OF TOLERANCE (5-7).

I. THE DUTY OF TOLERANCE (1-2).

Paul has been drawing a contrast between the believer who is mature in Jesus and understands his liberty in Christ and the believer who has not reached that level of maturity and does not feel free to live in liberty. He tells the stronger brother that he “*ought to bear the infirmities of the weak.*” The word “*ought*” introduces a condition of obligation. It tells us that we have a duty to our brothers in Jesus. *This duty can be carried out effectively if we will practice two methods of life.*

1. Live A Crucified Life (1). – We are told to “**bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.**” The word “*bear*” carries an obligation of self-denial and self-sacrifice. When Jesus went to the cross, He denied Himself, suffered in our place and bore our infirmities on the cross. He set the standard that we are all called upon to follow.

One of the problems of our day, both in the world and in the church, is that most people are so self-centered and so interested in

pleasing themselves that they cannot see the needs of others. This verse is a call for us to get our eyes off ourselves and to get them onto those around us so that we can reach out to them in the love of God and make a difference in their lives!

When the church operates as it should, there will be times when you will voluntarily lay aside your personal rights and privileges for the sake of others who may be weaker in the faith than you are. There will be times when you will deny self so that the church as a whole may prosper. That is Christ likeness in action! *That is a crucified life which leads us to...*

2. Live A Constructive Life – Paul tells us that we are to ***“please our neighbor”***. Paul is not saying that we should try to live to please everybody. He is not teaching that we should compromise our standards just to make someone happy. We are not to have a *please everyone at any cost* mentality.

Paul is saying that we are to live the kind of lives that build others up in the Lord, not to tear them down. Christians are one or the other, constructionist or demolitionist. Paul is saying that we should live the kind of lives that help others grow in the Lord and not hold them back. This may mean giving up a few rights along the way!

II. THE DEMONSTRATION OF TOLERANCE (3-4).

1. The Example Of Our Savior (3). ***For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.*** – Christ is our supreme example of a person who lived His life for the good of others. In all that He did, Jesus is our example, **1 Pet. 2:21. *For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an***

example, that ye should follow his steps: He sets the standard that we are to follow as we go through life. Think of all that Jesus went through to provide salvation for you and me. He left Heaven, He suffered poverty, He was reproached, hated, and rejected by those He came to save. Ultimately, He was nailed to a cross and there He died for a people who hated Him, so that they might live! He lived His life to please the Father, **John 4:34; John 8:29**, and in doing so He was able to give His life for the world. When we live to please the Lord and do His will, we will have achieved the goal of being, like Jesus, a living sacrifice, **Rom. 12:1-2**.

2. The Encouragement Of The Scriptures (4). For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. – The idea of this verse is that when we go through this life serving the Lord, there will be times of discouragement and defeat. In those times, we need to learn to look to the Word of God. It is there that we will find the encouragement we will need to continue on for the glory of the Lord. Therefore, the believer must be well acquainted with the Bible. When the difficult days come, and they will! You can run to the Word of God and find help and strength to make it through those valleys. No one ever said that the Christian life was an easy life. However, it is not an impossible life! When a believer lives for the Lord, there will be times when we feel like throwing in the towel, but the Word of God will enable us to continue on for the glory of God.

III. THE DELIGHT OF TOLERANCE (5-7).

In these closing verses, Paul uses a word four times. This one word is the secret of a great church. A great church is found in the little word “*one*”. What makes a great church is “*unity*”. When we come to the place where we can love one another in spite of our

differences, when we can accept one another in spite of our disagreements, when we can worship together in spite of our personal opinions, then we are on the way to becoming a great church! **There is a payoff for being like Jesus.** *These verses tell us that that payoff is threefold*

1. Produces A Unity Of Purpose (5). Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus. – This verse tells us that we are to be **“likeminded.”** That is, we are to be one in purpose. This was the secret of the early church. They grew by leaps and bounds because they possessed one common goal: ***see men come to faith in Jesus Christ.*** Over and over in the book of Acts, you read the phrase **“in one accord”**. They were likeminded. They wanted to see people saved and that was their supreme goal as a church. Everything they did revolved around bringing men to faith in Jesus Christ. I am convinced that that is solution to every problem any church has! When we can come together around the goal and purpose of getting the Gospel out to as many people as possible, the Lord will bless that! When the church stops arguing over the color of the carpet, what kind of hymnal we use, who did or did not clean up this or that, and get our focus back on the primary task of the church, that of winning souls, we will see the Lord bless. After all, Paul tells us to do this **“according to Christ Jesus”**. Why did He come to this world? He came to die on the cross, **Luke 19:10; John 18:37; Phil. 2:5-8.** He came to see sinners saved. The church needs to rediscover that burden!

2. Produces A Unity Of Praise (6). That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are simply reminded that for us to glorify God, we must do so through our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is no other Way to approach Him. There is no other Way to serve Him. There is no other Way to know Him. Jesus, alone, is the Way, the Truth and the Life. The very fact that God would provide all this for us through the Lord Jesus Christ proves beyond all doubt that He is worthy of all the praise and glory we can render to Him.

3. Produces A Unity Of Practice (7). Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God. – When we are operating as we should be as a church, we will be quick to accept one another as we are. We will love each other in spite of our differences. We are to love one another, receive one another and accept one another just like Jesus did us!

Conclusion

So, do you have a problem accepting others just like they are? When they are different from you, you have an obligation to love them and to reach out to them with a Christ like love and compassion.