

# Welcome and Esteem One Another in the Lord

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] was so united again under Solomon and by the time Solomon's son was reigning, Rehoboam, we see that Israel and Judah had divided. And right throughout Israel's history we see of civil wars and we see of family wars and we see of divisions. And then when you come into the New Testament you'll find that there's a huge emphasis being put upon the importance of unity and the Apostle Paul when you see that he's always trying to deal with division in the various churches. The Corinthian church they were divided over leadership and they were ready to take one another to court. The Galatian church was reprimanded for biting and devouring one another.

The churches of Ephesus and Colossae they were being reminded by the Apostle of the importance of unity. The church in Philippi there were problems through two women who were squabbling and quarreling and that was beginning to threaten to break out into the church. And the believers in Rome were divided over special days and special diets and things like that. So you can see that division sadly is part and partial of the church. It shouldn't be but it is. And if we study church history we'll find as we go back there is division. So Paul is dealing really with these things and he's highlighting how important it is that we try and understand one another and that we are ready to welcome one another.

And Paul is highlighting the fact that we come from different backgrounds. Now the church in Rome there would be those who were Judaizers, those who had come from the Jewish religion and they would have come from a very strict and legalistic background. And then there would be those who had been converted who were Gentiles and they of course would be probably much freer. They wouldn't have this historical legalistic background. Now you and I know that there are many gray areas in life.

There are many things we know that are wrong because the Bible tells us so. There are many things that we know that we're to do because the Bible commands us so to do.

But you and I know that there are many what we would term gray areas where we may look at things in a different way. And we of course try to apply biblical principles to these situations. But often we meet situations and we say to ourselves, well this is not forbidden in God's word and this is not commanded in God's word.

[ 3 : 0 8 ] And so in these areas we have to try and apply biblical principles. But of course people might come at it in a different way. And that's the sort of thing that Paul is looking at here. Because Paul says in any relationship that has to be give and take.

In a marriage relationship that is give and take. In church relationships that is give and take. And so it's important to understand these things.

And so Paul is dealing really with the problems of tensions and disunity in this chapter and on into chapter 15. And I think if we were to kind of to sum up what Paul is saying. Christians are to receive one another.

Christians are to try and edify one another. And Christians should really be seeking to please one another. Now we see in the Roman church here there were those who were turned strong Christians and those who seem to be turned weak Christians.

Now the strong Christians aren't necessarily those who are very legalistic. In fact it could be the very reverse.

[ 4 : 2 7 ] They might be the weak Christians. We often tend to think that strong Christians are those who are very legalistic by nature and are bound by rules and laws.

But that isn't necessarily so. Because they don't in some ways they are weak because they're not able as it were to enjoy the freedom and the liberty that God's grace gives us.

And of course there is always we're always afraid that we can abuse grace and that Paul warns so strongly about using grace in order to sin.

That of course is terrible. But we can do that and that's where it is so wrong. But we're not to become so legalistic like the Pharisees where we're living our Christian life in straitjackets.

That's not the way we're to live. So Paul is dealing with these things and the whole thing of how sometimes we can be frightened of freedom and all that. And what was happening in the church here was that the weak Christians were judging and condemning the strong Christians and the strong Christians were despising the weak.

[ 5 : 44 ] so the first thing that Paul is saying to them is this very simply welcome or receive one another. And he's saying so because he's telling us that God has received us.

And that's why we should stop and think because it just makes so much sense that here we can be here's me and I'm being really judgmental and I'm being really critical about this Christian who is doing something or acting or behaving in a way that I just think is not right.

And I'm not talking about deliberate outward sinful behaviour but according to the way that I look at things I would say that is all wrong.

Well the first thing the apostle says is remember that this person is somebody who has been welcomed by the Lord. God has welcomed this person into the kingdom.

This person that you or I will be critical about is somebody that the Lord Jesus Christ has left the realms of heaven and has come down into this world and has died for them.

[ 7 : 01 ] And you know that's a sobering and a solemn thought that the person that we can be judgmental about and critical and critical of and condemning is somebody who is loved loved to the point of death by the Lord Jesus Christ.

So Paul is warning us about that and he's saying look it's very important that we welcome one another because the Lord has welcomed this person. And again Paul is reminding us that he's saying that in verse 4 there who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another it is before his own master that he stands or falls and he will be upheld for the Lord is able to make him stand.

And so as we look at other people's lives and this is what it's all about we might be making judgments and saying well that person that person is going to fall that person is a Christian but he's heading for a fall but Paul is saying no you've got to realize this person is being held by the Lord and though he fall he shall not be utterly cast down as the word of God says.

And another thing that we've got to remember is that sometimes when we judge another Christian our judgments can be completely wrong because we don't know the motive behind what they're doing.

Two people can be doing exactly the same thing. One person can be doing it to the Lord and is doing it of faith. The other person can be doing the same thing and the motive is of self.

[ 8 : 46 ] It's for selfishness or self-righteousness. And so the apostle is saying we have to be very careful because maybe the person that we are judging is doing something of faith and they're doing it to the Lord.

So that is why we need to be very careful. And the bottom line to a certain extent is the apostle is saying stop judging other people.

Stop being so obsessed with other people. At the end of the day it's between yourself and the Lord. At the end of the day it's you and I who will stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

That's really what he's saying in verse 12. So then each of us will give an account of himself to God. We don't give an account for somebody else.

They have to give an account of themselves to God. And I think we have a very clear illustration of that in the life of Peter.

[ 9 : 48 ] Do you remember how when Jesus had restored the apostle Peter on the shores of Galilee after his resurrection? And he's talking to Peter and he's questioning Peter and he's saying Peter do you love me?

And Peter says yes Lord you know all things you know that I love you and remember the Lord is saying feed my sheep and feed my lambs and so on. And then John is over there the apostle John and Peter catches sight because Jesus had been talking about Peter's future and what was going to happen and how he was eventually going to be martyred as it were for the faith.

And then Peter catching sight of John says what about him? What about John? And remember what Jesus said. What is that to you? You follow me.

In other words Jesus is saying never mind John. John is not meaning don't care for John, don't be prayerful about John, don't be willing to help John, but don't be judging John, don't be looking at John's life and analyzing it and assessing it.

You look to yourself. What is that to you? Peter, your job is to follow me. And I believe the Lord is often saying that to us as well.

[11:18] He says it to me as he says it to you because sometimes we're busy looking at this person and that person and the Lord is probably saying from heaven, I wish you would stop looking at these people and look to yourself, look to your own heart and make sure that your focus is on me, not on others, but on me.

As I said, don't get me wrong, it's not that the Lord doesn't want us to have care for one another, of course he does. The Lord wants us to pray for one another, the Lord wants us to look out for one another and to be there to help and to tend at any time of need.

That's part of the beauty of the community that we live in, a close-knit community. But we have to be careful that we don't become too involved in the way that other people live their lives.

So the apostle is kind of highlighting all these things in this. And then in verse 7, we have this idea of the lordship of Christ in the believer's life.

Because none of us ultimately live to ourselves. That was something, you'll see that written down, everybody knows that, even the philosophers of old, remember what it was at Plato who said, I was not born for myself alone.

[12:39] My country claims a part of me. My relations claim a part of me. My friends claim a part of me. So that's what that great philosopher way back, that's the conclusion he came to.

But the Christian goes a lot further. The Christian will say, Christ claims all of me, not just a part of me, all of me.

And that's something that we've got to remember, that we have been bought with a price, that we belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. And so we have to see the Lord Jesus in everything at all times, even in our eating, in our drinking, in everything that we do.

And it will be a good thing when we get up in the morning and as we're putting on our clothes, we should be thanking the Lord for the clothing that we have. But above all, we should be thanking him for the clothing that he has clothed us with, with the robe of righteousness, the covering of Christ.

And if we get up in the morning and dress like that, then that helps us to focus upon Jesus and what he has done for us. It's the same when we're eating or drinking, that we thank the Lord for what he has given us.

[14:01] And physically, the wonderful provision that is made for us, but also spiritually, that we are having the nourishment in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Again, I know things are different just now, but if we go to work, if we have work to go to, thank the Lord for it, and that we would seek to glorify God in whatever we do.

That's our chief aim here in this world. God. So in everything, we seek to live to him. And we say to the Lord, Lord, use me. Use me in this life.

But it's not, we see here, just in living, but even in dying. We live in the Lord, and the Lord is present with us all through our life.

But death is not something where the Lord says, you're on your own here. The Lord is part of our dying, too. And you know, we should ask for the grace to live and the grace to die.

[15:01] We should ask the Lord, help me, Lord, when it comes time for me to leave this world, that I will die full of faith, and that I will be so aware that I am dying in the Lord.

You know, it's a great witness and a great testimony to people who are watching and who are with Christians as they die. Christians who are full of faith.

And so we should be asking the Lord, help me, help me, Lord, that when I come to die, that I might die in, that I might be aware that I'm dying in the Lord.

We are dying in the Lord. For Christians we're dying in the Lord. There is no moment when we're in any way separated from him. So that is part of the beauty of what belongs to every single Christian. So we must remember that we all belong to Jesus. We are all family. We should be caring for one another and concerned for one another but not overly trying to analyse other people's lives but that we should have an acceptance and a tolerance of one another in the Lord.

[16:15] Recognising that people have different gifts and different abilities and some people are stronger in one thing and other people are stronger in another thing but everybody has their own

part to play in the kingdom and so it should be.

And so this is part of what Paul is highlighting for the wellbeing and the development and the glory and the good of the church here on earth. Let us pray.

Lord we give thanks for our short time together. We give thanks Lord for your word and that this word is indeed that which touches our heart.

We pray tonight that we might be strengthened in the faith. We pray Lord that we might be willing to be used by you. Forgive us when we're self-centred and selfish Lord and when we want to do our own thing and go our own way and when we deny you in our life.

We pray then that you will be merciful to us and gracious to us and that you will part us with your blessing as we will soon be parting from one another as it were on screen and on Zoom and bless all our homes and all our families.

[ 17 : 25 ] We give thanks Lord for those who led the praise tonight and for our brothers who have led us in the prayer. We ask now that you will do us good and cleanse us from our every sin we pray in Jesus name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.