

Sermons through

Romans

Receive One Another

Romans 15:7-13

With Study Questions

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5/7/2017*

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Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God. 8 Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers, 9 and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written: "For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, And sing to Your name." 10 And again he says: "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!" 11 And again: "Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!" 12 And again, Isaiah says: "There shall be a root of Jesse; And He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, In Him the Gentiles shall hope." 13 Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:7-13).

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Receiving Christ

There is a great deal of discussion, and rightfully so, from the lips of Christians regarding the receiving of Christ. It is wonderfully and powerfully conveyed by John:

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: 13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:12, 13).

It is a strong evangelistic passage. There is a great call which should proceed from the lips of Christians that their fellow man might receive Christ. And it seems only natural, when a decision is called for, that the evangelist assume that the person who is the recipient of the message call upon their own *ability*, or *will*, to respond properly. Yet in this highly

evangelistic passage, John is emphatic that it is not by the **“will of the flesh, nor of the will of man”** that people receive Christ.

When the Scriptures form these shorts lists (blood, will of flesh, will of man), we would do well to recognize that these lists, though not themselves exhaustive, are generally meant to be exhaustive. In short, we shouldn't seek to suppose there might be some other type of human will (be it intellectual will, libertarian will, desperate will, humble will, etc.) that men are capable of employing to their own salvation, especially since the passage indicates the source of our spiritual birth *gennao* being none other than God Himself.

The doctrine which emphasizes this monergism (power from one source), commonly called Calvinism or the Doctrines of Grace, are the source of no small controversy. Even among Christians it is not always well received. For the sake of peace, it is often relegated to discussions in dark corners among the church's eggheads. People view it as academic, theological, difficult and troublesome, but not terribly helpful in the practical application of daily Christian life.

Many sermons can be dedicated to the refutation of such a disposition; sermons addressing, pride, assurance, sovereignty, praise and worship to be sure. But here we will isolate our thoughts to the application of our mutual love, acceptance and forbearance (Ephesians 4:2). Because in the current passage our focus is not on our receiving of Christ, but on something we hear less about, His receiving of us.

Received by Christ

We are called to receive one another and **“just as Christ also received us.”** For us to embark upon this, we need to begin to understand how He received us. What we will find when we open this treasure is unfathomable grace. It is something which should trigger a sense of marvel in our hearts and fully transform the patterns of exchange we have with others.

We speak of a personal relationship with Christ, but we have no other personal relationships which come close to mirroring what had to take place in order for this relationship to be reconciled. And **“reconciled”** *katallagemen* is the word. Let us take a brief look at how we were received by Christ with the intent of applying a similar spirit toward one another.

In one brief passage earlier in Romans, Paul wrote of the great joy of having **“received the reconciliation” (Romans 5:11)**. But prior to that, he elaborates on the roles of the players in this great drama of redemption. A sort of amplification of the simple phrase, **“nor of the will of man.”**

In five short verses we are described as **“weak, ungodly, sinners, (and) “enemies”** of God. This is what we bring to the table of our redemption-of our being received. Other adjectives include **“wretched, miserable, poor, blind, naked” (Revelation 3:17)**. In short, **“dead in trespasses and sin” (Ephesians 2:1)**. The Scriptures are not in short supply when it comes to the description of the darkened condition of natural man, especially in contrast to holy, righteous and glorious God.

Conversely, what Christ brings to the table, or perhaps better put, the altar, is His own life. In the same passage (Romans 5:6-10), we read that Christ was not selfish or angry toward the **“ungodly”** but rather **“Christ died for the ungodly”**. And again it is written, **“that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”** By **“His blood”** Paul writes, we are **“justified”** (declared righteous) and **“saved from wrath”**. We were **“reconciled to God through the death of His Son”**.

Notice the recurring theme. We bring sin which deserves death and He offers His own death, which brings life. It is here that we pause and note the high call of receiving others as we have been received. It is no less than a celestial call. Little wonder that Paul records that the entire enterprise is glorious to God. The love we are called to have and the forbearing spirit we are to exhibit is based upon a love and forbearing spirit given to us while in hostile, abject rebellion against the one loving us.

In case there is doubt, Paul brings forth the work of Christ in the next verse as that of a suffering servant.

Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers (Romans 15:8).

The Jews

What we begin to see now is how these factions within the church (Jewish Christians having difficulty with the liberality of the gentile Christians and the gentile Christians despising the Jewish Christian for

their weakness in holding to the shadows and traditions) are made of souls who form one body according to God's most wise, holy and eternal design.

God made promises to Israel that are fully kept by the redeeming work of Christ. This was all explained by Paul in chapters nine through eleven. God is a covenant-making/covenant-keeping God! But what was getting in the way of their peace was an ignorance of the big picture-that big picture being the inclusion of the gentiles (non-Jews). That is was always God's plan to include the nations, to save, as it were, the world (Matthew 28:18-20; John 3:17; 12:47).

He brings forth the Scriptures (as good ministers should) to express his point. Jesus' keeping of the promises made to the fathers (generally understood to be Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) had far-reaching effects.

...and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written: "For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, And sing to Your name." 10 And again he says: "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!" 11 And again: "Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!" 12 And again, Isaiah says: "There shall be a root of Jesse; And He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, In Him the Gentiles shall hope" (Romans 15:9-12).

The Gentiles

The recurring theme in these quotations (2 Samuel 22:50; Psalm 18:49; Deuteronomy 32:43; Psalm 117:1; Isaiah 11:1, 10) is the inclusion of all the nations in God's plan of redemption. But let us not miss the means by which this would find expression. David would "confess" (the 2 Samuel passage uses "praise") his faith in God among the gentiles and "sing praises". It would be through the worshiping voices of the faithful that pour out His blessings. Will our voices be included?

All the world is called to "**rejoice, praise the Lord**" and "**Laud Him**" which means to speak of His excellence. Through Jesse, the father of David, Christ would come. And even though the words "**He who shall rise**" is not necessarily a reference to the resurrection in this particular verse, the resurrection of Christ is the hope of the world.

But the point Paul seems to be making here is that within the church we have the "**work of God**" (Romans 14:20). And from eternity past, God

determined that it would include the person sitting next to you. And we should not view the weakness of our neighbor as God's mistake. Such a disposition inevitably leads to failure.

Consider marriage. So many in difficult marriages yield to the temptation to admit they made a mistake. Yet Jesus taught that the covenant of marriage and its attending union, or one-ness, is established by God Himself. **"Therefore" Jesus taught, "what God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matthew 19:6b).**

The following may be a way to approach this: If God were to sit us down in His hidden chambers, saying, "I know you. I formed you." And it dawned on us how true. How the hidden and unsearchable attributes within my own soul, things I can't seem to access about myself, were fully known to Him. And then He said "And I know another equally as well and have determined that it is best for you, them, my kingdom and my glory for you to be together. This is my mission for you." Do we truly think there would be any part of us in that dialogue that would resist for a moment? No! We, like Isaiah, would merely utter the words **"Here am I! Send me" (Isaiah 6:8).**

It is our unwillingness to acknowledge the holy decrees (decisions) of an all-wise, all-powerful, all-knowing, all-good God that extracts from us of our required resolve, that a king has given us a mission. The result being the weak knees of the **"double-minded" man *dipsychos*** (literally, the two-souled man-James 1:8).

We have been received by this King who loves us through the sacrifice and death of His Son. We sit here now hearing the words of this King telling us to receive one another as we have been received. What a wonderful kingdom! Paul concludes with a prayerful benediction that we might know the hope, joy and peace in believing-recognizing our dependence upon the Spirit.

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13).

Questions for Study

1. How is it that one comes to receive Christ? What must happen in order for that to take place (pages 2, 3)?
2. Why is John emphatic about the human will? What difference does it make (pages 2, 3)?
3. How is our relationship with Christ different than all other relationships (pages 3, 4)?
4. Discuss the various components of being received by Christ. What do we offer? What does Christ offer (pages 3, 4)?
5. How has understanding the way you are received by Christ change the way you interact with others (page 4)?
6. What did many of the Christian Jews seem to miss when it came to God's plan of redemption (pages 4, 5)?
7. How does an understanding of God's holy decrees (plans) alter the way we approach difficulties (pages 5, 6)?