

The Joy of Fellowship

(Rom 1:7-15)

Read introduction: Rom 1:1-15

- Dealing with things Paul says about himself

I. We have considered what Paul said concerning his ministry:

- A) “In service”
- B) “In spirit”
- C) “In gospel”
- D) “In power”

II. Rom 1:12- “In fellowship”

A) “That is”- Explaining verse 11, or “in other words here is what I mean”

1. Paul didn’t want them to take verse 11 in the wrong way, as an arrogant statement about his superiority or their lack
 - i. Paul is sincere, and just being politically correct, or patronizing
 - ii. 1 Cor 3:7- Neither he that planteth nor he that watereth are anything
 - iii. 1 Cor 4:7- If we have it, we received it of God
 - iv. 2 Cor ch 11&12- If ever a Christian had a right to be puffed up, it was Paul, and yet he was the most humble

B) “Comfort”- to encourage, strengthen, to support

C) “Comforted together with you”- so we can be mutually benefited, comforted and built up together

1. In other words Paul expected a great exchange, both giving and both receiving
2. Eph 4:16- The whole body working together for benefit of all

D) Paul was as certain of the outcome of verse 12 as he was of verse 11

1. Every Christian can benefit every other Christian and be benefited by them
2. Phil 1:5- This is the “fellowship of the saints”

III. This verse has much to say to the church of our time, as it tells us Paul’s doctrine and practice concerning Christian fellowship, and his attitude towards fellow believers

A) Paul looked for the Spirit in others, and first sought that common link of all believers

1. Acts 18:1-2- Paul “found” Aquila and Priscilla
2. Acts 19:1-2- Found disciples and did not sense the Spirit
3. Paul wasn’t concerned with nationality, race, denomination, etc., he was concerned with regeneration
 - i. If there is regeneration and the Spirit there is fellowship

- ii. This is the first thing Satan seeks to block, then he must understand the power of it
 - iii. Are we delighted to meet fellow-believers in whom we find this?
- B) When Paul found it, he enjoyed it and benefited
 - 1. Paul had fellowship with the lowest of Christians in man's terms
 - i. Consider the servants of Caesars household, or Onesimus the escaped slave
 - ii. Can we say this? Would you rather spend an hour with the lowest saint or with the most exalted unbeliever?
- C) Paul's doctrine on authority in the church
 - 1. Compare the behavior of the greatest apostle and Saved sinner with the "Christian" leaders today
 - i. Pope- "I will allow you to come into my presence and kiss my feet or ring"
 - a) This was brought in by Constantine and his blending of pagan power with Christian profession, creating a monarchy
 - ii. Mega-church pastor- "I will be at my book signing on....."
 - 2. The greatest Christian worker after Christ was excited, even elated to meet the lowest Christian slaves in Rome
 - i. This shows us the complete equality in the church the body of Christ
 - ii. Matt 20:25-28- No such custom in church
 - a) 1 Pet 5:1-3- "Not lording it over them"
 - b) Phil 2:3-9- Example of God Himself in the flesh
 - iii. The only authority the N/T recognizes is Spiritual authority, or in the power of the Spirit
 - a) It's never about the man, but the power of Spiritual authority God has poured upon him
 - 1) Example of the power and authority of Whitefield, Edwards, etc.
 - 2) The church lacks authority today because she lacks power, and not the opposite
 - (a) The ecumenical movement thought to take power by taking authority and exalting men to positions of preeminence, this is completely backwards
 - (b) The "church powers" hated Whitefield and the real power of his ministry
 - (c) One man with this power accomplishes more than the entire ecumenical church
- D) Paul's expectation of fellowship
 - 1. Paul expected a mutual exchange, profitable to both parties
 - i. 2 Pet 1:1- "Like precious faith"

- ii. 1 John 1:3-4- Joy of fellowship
 - a) Rom 1:8- There is great joy when faith shows forth itself in living
 - b) 2 John 4- Great joy in seeing your walk
 - c) 3 John 3-4- No greater joy than spiritual children growing in the Lord
 - 1) Example of Spurgeon during a battle with depression and then hearing a young preacher use his sermon, the joy it brought not only by scripture and assurance, but by the young man's walk
 - 2) "My heart has been warmed by our meeting"
 - 3) Compare this with Paul and the Galatians (Gal 4:15-20)
 - d) Nothing is more encouraging for a minister than to see his brothers and sisters growing in Christ
 - 1) Great privilege of watching the Spirit of God work
 - e) There is great profit and great joy that comes from reading about the lives of the saints
- iii. Dependence upon fellow believers and their prayers
 - a) Consider this great apostle pleading with believers for their prayers
 - 1) Rom 15:20- Strive together in prayer for me
 - 2) Eph 6:18-19- Prayer for his ministry
 - 3) Phil 1:19- Confidence in their prayers