

Life aboard the Fellowship
Agree with One Another
Romans 15:5-6

October 4, 2009

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Introduction to Text: We are in a series of messages entitled “Life aboard the Fellowship” in Romans 15. There are 8 imperatives (as I see it) that we are given in Romans 15. The first action is given to us in verse 1. We are to “Bear with one Another when there is a difference of opinion over things not specifically covered in Scripture. The second action that we talked about is in verses 2-4 and deals with the idea of “Pleasing One Another. We encounter the third action in verses 5 and 6.

Text: ⁵ Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, ⁶ that you may with one mind *and* one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (NIV) endurance and encouragement)

Introduction: I was reminded this week of a classic silly historical question that fits so perfectly to the point of this series. The question was, “How many angels can dance on the head of pin?” or as some have posed the question, “The point of a pin?” The origin of the debate is said by some to go all the way back to the Middle Ages. That scholars actually really debated the issue is really in question, but rather this question kind of serves as an example of the relentless questions that some Medieval scholars did raise in reference to angels. The question about angels on the head of a pin has become an analogy of the kind of unimportant questions that sometimes bog Christians down.

I read that some years ago a poster made the rounds depicting two people kneeling over an object on the ground. Closer examination revealed that they were looking at a needle no doubt counting the number of angels on the pin. That is something of the kind of stuff that we are dealing with in Romans 15.

There seems to be something of next step progression in these opening verses of chapter 15, so the message this morning reflects that next step progression.

The Next Step Reality for Fellowship

The first word that we encounter in the text this morning is the word translated into English, “Now.” The word, “now” sort of like the word “therefore” causes us to look back. I sense that the now is telling us that we are to move forward in our fellowship. I hear the text telling us that “Bearing with one another” and “Pleasing one another” is just the beginning. Once we understand these imperatives, we are ready to move on to the next command: “Be like-minded” or as I have described it for you this morning, “Agree with one another.”

You say, “That’s a big step.” It is. What does this mean to be like-minded? This is not uniformity; this is unity. It is the action to display toward one another.

The Next Step Requirements

The real importance of these two verses is found in a list of requirements in order to achieve like-mindedness. What does it take to be like-minded? That is, what does it take to be agreeable even when we do not really agree on an issue?

- **Grace**—Notice the phrase, “May God grant you.” In order to be like-minded, we are first of all in need of God’s grace. We need to both receive grace and give grace. Like-mindedness only happens as a result of God’s grace. Receiving God’s grace, we have to be committed to giving God’s grace.
- **Patience**—The NIV translates the word, “endurance.” Let’s be honest with each other. In order for like-mindedness to occur, we are going to have to endure with some folks.
- **Encouragement**—What if we started discouraging one another and started encouraging one another? We might find out that we have less to be discouraged about? I am talking about positive influencing someone toward our position rather than negatively trying to argue someone down toward our position.
- **Focused on the Essentials**—Don’t forget this: These are matters “according to Christ Jesus.”

Before we leave this section, notice how two of these words also appear in verse 4. The stories of the Bible are in part preserved for us to be an example to us of patience and encouragement. I thought about a lot this week. What kind of stories help here? One story that almost immediately comes to my mind is from the life of the Apostle Paul, the author of Romans. We read the story in Acts 15. The Bible tells us that Paul said to his missionary companion Barnabas to re-visit all of the churches that they had begun on an earlier mission. The Bible says that Barnabas desired to bring John Mark along, but Paul “kept insisting” that John Mark not go because on the earlier trip he had deserted them. The Bible says that “there arose such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another.” Here’s the point. They did separate, but not over the essentials. They stayed very much together on the essentials and took the necessary steps in order for the Gospel to progress.

The Next Step Result

Finally, we see in our text the wonderful result of like-mindedness.

Unified Worship

I consider myself a student of church growth. I read a lot about the churches that are growing, baptizing a lot of converts. I research the web pages of these churches to find out what they are doing, etc. You know my basic feeling about church growth after all of my years of studying churches. God can and does bless most any kind of church. Some are rural. Some are downtown. Some are in metropolitan areas. Some are in towns that you and I have never heard. Some have very traditional worship and programming. Some have extremely modern ideas of how to do church. But all are unified. God can and does most any kind of church, but He cannot bless a church that needs to repent of fellowship struggles.

Remember that poster I told you about at the beginning with the two people stooped over a pin. In the background of that poster there were depicted men and women inching their way toward a cliff that

had fire coming up from the cliff. The artist proved the point well. Here the church is arguing about stuff that really doesn't matter while men and women move ever closer to Hell. Church, may it never be here!