

## Humility is the Key Romans 12:16

Last time we were together we went over verse 15 that we are to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. We realize that so many individuals weep when others are rejoicing and rejoice when others are weeping. And the reason why is we want others to suffer. We do not want others to have an easy life and our lives are many times consumed with anger against others. And in verse 14 we are commanded to bless those who persecute us and not to curse them. And this is more than mere words but an attitude that comes from the heart. God has so transformed our inner life that what comes out of us is totally different from the world around us, even our relations with our enemies or those who oppose us.

And there are many reasons why we might rejoice when others suffer or weep when others are rejoicing. One might be that we live in a hypercritical society where we are constantly analyzing everything and over analyzing everything that we might feel very little when people are going through things in their lives. We always find a reason why they should suffer or always find some reason why they should not have certain blessings in their lives. Another reason is envy. We look at what people have and we think we deserve it, therefore we are saddened when they rejoice. Why didn't God cause my children to turn out that way, or give a marriage that is that blessed, or a job that is that fulfilling or why didn't the pastor ask me to speak but asked him to speak at that function? And an envious person cannot rejoice over the good in another's life. Also an envious person cannot weep when another weeps. He is getting what he deserves is the attitude of the envious. And we so quickly as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ forget what we deserve.

And the real problem is what we will discuss this morning, and that is pride, or a lack of humility. You can always tell when someone is growing in the grace of Christ and really grasping the truths of Scripture because they will not grow in thinking well of themselves but thinking well of Christ. Their faith is in Christ. And think of even weeping with those who weep and rejoicing with those who rejoice. The reason you are able to do that is not according to what people deserve but you realize the amazing grace of God, his unmerited and undeserved favour and mercy in your life that you give that mercy and grace. No one gives grace better than a person who realizes how much grace they have been given and how much grace they need from God. Proud individuals will look at verse 16 and either think they have mastered it or it is just not that important of a command even though it is in God's word. They will find reasons why not to obey the summons here. And their main focus is on self. They have an inflated view of self, but the scary thing about pride is that it is blinding. The proud person does not realize he is proud and therefore continues in his pride. And I cannot think of a sin that has done more harm to the cause of Christ than pride. And those who have done that harm have done it in the name of Christ - blinded by their own pride to the damage that they have done.

Listen to what C.S. Lewis writes, **"Whenever we find that our religious life is making us feel that we are good—above all, that we are better than someone else—I think we may be sure that we are being acted on not by God but by the Devil. The real test of being in the presence of God is that you either forget about**

**yourself altogether or see yourself as a small, dirty object. It is better to forget about yourself altogether.”** And he is absolutely right. Behind so much discord in our churches, marriages and relationships is pride. And we might be in discord with others and might think of the other person and say “amen” to what I just said, but really not see pride in our own life. Remember pride is easy to see in others, but very difficult to see in self. Do you have an inflated view of others? Are you known as a hypercritical person? God wants you to hear these commands this morning. He wants you to grow in humility and obey these commands from the heart. We have three commands here in verse 16 that all deal with relating with one another, and in order to obey them we must live and grow in humility.

1. We are commanded to think a certain way about one another. Vs 16a

One of the most natural things that we do as sinners is compare ourselves with one another. And it is incredible how we think better of ourselves than others who are around us. Think of it: do you think that you are a more loving or more godly partner than your spouse? Do you think you are a better child to your parents than the other children in your home? Do you think you are a better employee than most of the people that you work with? There is something that unites us all together and that is that we think that we are better than others. We might not be that bold and saying that but the truth is when we compare ourselves with others we come to think more highly of ourselves than we should. We think that we are better, and we quickly forget what we have learned in the opening 11 chapters to humble our hearts.

We forget that none of us sought for God. We forget that we are not justified in God's sight through our own merit or goodness but because of the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ. There is nothing good or salvific in me. I am saved by grace alone through Christ alone. We realize that without God's grace even in the presence that there is no way that I could ever please God or live for him. We forget that the reason why I am a believer is not that God needed me or saw something that he had to have but it was according to God's elective purposes alone. The gospel humbles us. The truth of the gospel should humble us. That is why Paul says in verse one of this chapter, **“I appeal to therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God.”** Why should we and why do we need to walk in humility and grow in humility as we seek to obey these commands? Because of the mercies of God in our lives.

So look at what Paul commands here, **“Live in harmony with one another.”** Now what does he mean to live in harmony with one another? Harmony speaks of a peace and union with one another. But let me give you a couple other translations of this command. “Be of the same mind toward one another.” “Think the same way toward one another.” Be of the same mind or think the same way really explains the command and how this harmony is to be achieved. And please do not misunderstand the text. The text is not saying that we always have to be in agreement or thinking the exact same way. But being of the same mind is having the mind of Christ. It is thinking of people through the gospel. It is believing the same truths about them that the gospel teaches about you. I need grace therefore in his or her weakness. I need to give grace and not a harsh and bitter judgment. I need to speak truth in love. I need to know that I am not over or better than people.

Listen to what Paul says in Philippians 2:2-5, “**complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.**” And then he goes on and talks about Jesus humility of coming in humanity even though he is God and dying the most humiliating death for sinners on the cross.

And it is our natural sinful and proud bent to compare ourselves with others and think that we are better, and there is no way that we can show forth the glory of God’s mercy and grace in the church by living in harmony with one another unless we are viewing one another, and self through the gospel. Harmony takes work on my own heart and life. My opponent is not the only sinner in the room. He is not the the only one who is in need of God’s grace. He is not the only one battling pride. We must view all of life not through our own demented mirrors but through the perfect mirror of the gospel. If not we will live in constant disharmony just like the world around is in pride and the light of the gospel will be blunted. Don’t be blind to your need of God’s grace. Don’t fool yourself in exalting yourself that you are better than others. Be of the same mind and live in harmony. That is the first command.

2. The second command of the humble life is associate with all. V.16b.

We might think that this command is not a problem with us, but it is easy even when we are meeting on a Sunday morning to associate with others that we know well. There might be someone over there that no one is talking with or fellowshiping with and we do not even notice them. Or it might be a visitor and we feel awkward going over to them. I will let someone else talk to them and make them feel welcomed. And we might not be even recognizing that God calls the humble to put themselves in uncomfortable positions and to think of others above themselves. And this is one of the tangible ways that we do that in our lives. We seek to associate with others, even others that we normally would not associate with. That is one of the incredible outcomes of new life in Jesus Christ. We associate with people that we would have never associated with before. They might be a different economic level or a different country or culture or race or whatever, but in some way we create artificial distinctions that others are below us. The gospel shows us we are all the same. We are needy, sinners, and the one greatest need that binds us all together is salvation in Christ, and that need is met in Christ. It is what causes us to be united in the closest of relationships that can only be described as the family of God. And are you seeking to relate and associate with others irregardless of who they are? Are you making it more about others and less about you?

Look at what Paul commands us here, “**Do not be haughty but associate with the lowly.**” Now notice that this command has two parts. One is calling us away from something and the other is calling us to someone, but they are both related. In other words, if we are not doing the first part of the verse we cannot do the second part of the verse. If we are haughty then others will be below us and we will not want to be seen with them or associate with them. Now what does haughty mean? And we

certainly would come up with pride as a synonym and we would be right. It literally means being “high-minded” and it is not high minded about the things of God but about self. It is pride on steroids. It is an inflated view of self. It is like the Pharisees who loved the chief seats in the synagogue so everyone else could recognize their importance. And haughtiness causes us not see people.

Remember the rich young ruler who came to Jesus and asked in Matthew 19:16, **“Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?”** And Jesus responds with these commands which is just a summary of the Ten Commandments, **“You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself”** (18-19). He says he has kept all of these commands. The amazing thing is the last command there, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself,” and the reason why is that he is rich and in order to get to Jesus he had to pass through a huge crowd of poor people who were suffering and before Christ at this time. And in his pride he is so oblivious to his own sin, but he does not even see the plight of these individuals. And that is what haughtiness does. It blinds us to others. It blinds us to even notice them. And let me ask you: are you noticing people around you? Are you missing where God calls you to minister because people are beneath you and you no longer are even aware that they are around you?

And think of who the lowly are. Listen to what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:26-29, **“For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.”** I cannot say it forceful enough - these are the individuals that we are to associate with - the ones that are despised by the world. And when Paul gives the command here, “but associate with the lowly,” the word “associate” is so strong. It means literally carried away. It pictures something acting upon us and carrying us away, and here it is befriending and ministering to individuals that we would have never ministered to or befriended before we ever came to Christ. Church and the relations in church have become so central in our lives. It speaks of the glorious transformation that has happened in our lives. God chose lowly things and we love the lowly and we are drawn toward them the more our hearts are set on Christ. Church is not something we just go to, but it is the body of Christ and we live and breathe and function in that humble body. Haughtiness was part and parcel of the old life. Associating and loving those in the church is our new life and our calling.

3. The third command of humility is don't be wise in your own sight. V.16c.

And this is such an important command because again remember we are drawn toward pride. And one of the things that you have to remember about Christianity is that it is intellectual. Wherever true Christianity has come the level of education has gone up. People want to learn and grow in the truth of God's Word. And they do. They learn things about God, self and the world that they never knew before. And we are

commanded to grow in our knowledge of God and his grace in 2 Peter 3:18, “**But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.**” But with that knowledge doesn’t necessarily come godliness. People can have a whole lot of knowledge and be puff up or arrogant. They can actually look down at others who have not attained the levels of knowledge that they have attained.

And here we have this command from Paul, “**Never be wise in your own sight.**” Now what does “never” mean? It means never. And notice that this is not so much before others although the outworking of it will be, but “in your own sight” is a way of seeing self. It is a way of thinking about self. It is amazing because the more we learn about God’s Word should cause us to realize how much we do not know. I often think about that when I hear a sermon that someone preaches on a passage that I have preached from, and they bring out a truth that is so evident in the text that I did not even see until they pointed it out. All of us are infants and toddlers before our massive and all knowing God. Even the doctrine of salvation none of us could have ever figured it out on our own. God had to reveal it to us to even make it effective in our lives so that we would see the wisdom and glory of God. If he didn’t act we would think it was foolish or would have rejected it as offensive.

And think of how being wise in our own sight effects us. It causes us not to receive ministry from others. I can’t be taught by others because they are below me. I should be teaching them. I can remember talking to someone who was so convinced that in his church, and he belonged to a good church that everyone was wrong, and he was the only one that could see clearly. He looked down on others, and therefore could never be blessed through their ministry.

It also causes us to miss the cumulative wisdom of others. We are all limited. So in order to make the right decisions and walk in the light of Christ I need others to speak truth into my life. Even in the church of Christ, the decisions that are made and brought forth to the congregation for them to decide are not made by one, or one or two elites, but are made by many who lead, and then are made by the congregation itself. And I don’t know how many times I would have made a bad decision if I did not have the wisdom of others who spoke the truth.

Being wise in your own estimation will always cause your spiritual life to be ineffective and blunted because there is no way that you can grow without humility. God opposes the proud, so how could you ever grow? That is the contradiction in thinking that you have arrived, and that is you have not and you are not hear. People have that inflated view of their wisdom pass over their own sin as not that big of a deal. They are minor, but they maximize in their own minds the things that others do or what others struggle with. There is no room for growth in their lives because they are so much wiser and higher than others. And that causes them to isolate from others. How can they associate with others who are below them. Proud people cause damage in good churches and leave good churches. Why? Because they are wise in their own estimation.

As close this morning, let me ask ask you, which person are you more alike? Because we are blind to pride, which person would others say that we are like? Listen to the parable Jesus taught in Luke 18:10-14, “**Two men went up into the temple to**

**pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.'"**

The gospel will humble us, and the only way that we can relate to one another and obey these commands and live in such a way to display the mercies of God in living in light of that gospel. May God be praise and the saints be edified through the humble lives of believers in Christ.