

Conclusion

A. Sandra Bullock won an Oscar this year for her role in the movie *Blind Side*, based on the book by the same name. It is a moving story that I can recommend.

More from the book than the movie we learn that since most NFL quarterbacks are right handed, owners are willing to pay premium dollars for a good left-tackle – those 300 pound giants who are as agile as a ballerina. That’s the position that will protect the quarterback’s blind side. When a quarterback turns to his right his blindside is extremely vulnerable. Today left-tackles are paid on average \$5.5 million. Only starting quarterbacks are paid more.

B. I realize I changed metaphors from a party to football, from a banquet host to a left tackle, but my question has to do with our real care for one another. What would it take for you to be the “left tackle” for a brother or sister in the church? The biblical word for “accept” is a picture of God rushing to our rescue. And here we have a command to practice the art of accepting one another.

Will you make God “look good” by accepting and protecting others? Doctrinally speaking, God doesn’t need us to make him look good. But he is looking for those who will obey his command to, “Accept one another, just as Christ accepted you (Vs. 7).

C. This week our staff has been practicing and applying Romans 15:13. What a powerful thought to begin each day. What a timely truth to apply to every trial. What a focused way to let God help you accept one another! Make this your daily prayer:

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

“The Kingdom of God is a Party” 3/21/10 RMBC
(And everyone’s invited) Romans 15:1-13 Pastor Dennis

Introduction

A. I’m not trying to shock you with the title of the sermon; just inviting you to see a biblical image of God that we easily overlook – God who invites us to celebrate. On earth Jesus ate and drank with many people; he told parables about great feasts and banquets. One day he will call us to a great, heavenly banquet to celebrate with joy – in that sense the Kingdom of God is a party.

B. Last Sunday, due to some yet unexplained error, we only got to see half of the Kingdom Kids video. As I show it to you again remember that the title of this ministry is “Kingdom Kids.” What does it look like when we throw a party for kids of the Kingdom? Watch this . . .

C. I like to think of last Sunday evening as a “Kingdom Party”. After 8 weeks of inviting the kids onto our campus, we hosted their families – people from every imaginable walk of life. We were saying, “The Kingdom of God is a party, and everyone is invited.” I see a connection between that and our study in Romans 15. Paul concludes his rather long speech about loving others, and emphasizes once more that our goal is to accept one another. Our earthly celebrations can be a reflection of the heavenly party to come – everyone’s invited.

D. There is a fascinating literary structure to Romans 15:1-13. As we look closely we discover two sections that are practically identical. Look at this for a moment:

Parallel Structure of Romans 15:1-13		
Vs. 1-2	Command	Vs. 7
Vs. 3	Illustration	Vs. 8-9a
Vs. 4	Supporting Evidence	Vs. 9b-12
Vs. 5-6	Benediction	Vs. 13

Our Obligation Vs. 1,2,7

A. Would you open your heart to God’s command this morning? Because that is what we have here. In vs. 1-2 it is softened a bit with words like “ought” and “should”, but by vs. 7 we have the direct command: Accept one another.

I just have to remind you: The commands of God are not suggestions. In Exodus we don’t have the Ten Suggestions. If God is truly good to the core, then his commands will always be for our good, for our well-being, and for his glory.

B. Here's something I learned about the word "accept". In the Greek translation of the O.T. (The Septuagint) this word is found eight times and every time it describes God's action when he comes rushing to the aid of his children. When God hurries to help believers in their weakness; when he moves to save his people in affliction and in times of loneliness, he is accepting them.

C. Would you view this command in that light? As we look out for those who are troubled, weary, lonely, desperate, anxious, and weak we obey God. We could say that we are most like God when we accept those who are in need. Paul actually says it like this: The strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak.

Have you ever been invited to a celebration and then been told, "By the way, don't bring the children." That may not be the best example but in a way it says, "We're not prepared to accept the weak." Here's the point: In the world we always invite those who are most like us. In the Kingdom everyone is accepted.

How do we get there? How do we live like that?

Illustration vs. 3,8,9a

A. Paul uses our Lord Jesus as an illustration of how to accept one another. Jesus, the Son of God, was scorned, rejected, and insulted by those who opposed him – yet he pressed on. According to vs. 8 he became a servant. He served those insulting him.

B. Carrying over from his thoughts in the previous section (14:13-23) Paul paints a word picture of Christ limiting himself. Jesus:
Limited himself to human form – though he was God
Limited himself to being a Jew – though he was for all people
Limited himself to the Law – though he was above the Law
Limited himself to sinner's baptism – though he was without sin

C. I agree with the limerick that reads, "To love the world, for me is no chore. My problem is with the guy next door." Jesus loved the world, and proved it by loving even those "next door" – the Jew as well as the Gentile, the sinner as well as the saint, you as well as me. This is the truth that can move us to accept others. John put it like this in I John 4:11, "Dear friends, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." (Insert "accept" for "love")

Supporting Evidence vs. 4,9b-12

A. In this section Paul shows that the idea of accepting one another has been God's plan all along – it's not really so new. Remember that by the time Paul wrote Romans, Jews and Gentiles had contempt for each other that would match any prejudice of our day – the current Nigerian conflict, the former racial prejudice of our past, the recent ethnic cleansing in Yugoslavia.

The Jews called the Gentiles "dogs" -- it was a sin to eat with them. The Gentiles paid it back with their own brand of hatred. No two groups have been more opposite.

B. What Paul does here is quote from all three sections of the O.T.: the writings (Psalms), the Law (Deuteronomy), the Prophets (Isaiah), to show that all along God has been working to bring these two people groups together. The Gentiles in Rome probably thought the O.T. was irrelevant – Paul shows them it is right on target and contemporary. The Jews in Rome probably didn't see that their own Scriptures had already predicted God including the Gentiles – Paul shows them how wrong they were.

C. Do you get the force of these quotes? Our own motivation to accept one another, in addition to Christ's example, comes from all the O.T. writings and all the O.T. promises and prophecies. Paul seems to be saying, "Wake up people! This has been God's way all along. Accepting one another is God's way."

Positive Application vs. 5,6,13

A. You would think that if God's Word commands it, and Christ's life shows it, and the Scriptures teach it, we would accept each other. But instead of the norm it's the exception. The challenge to accept each other is one of the most difficult things, so Paul repeated himself; he wrote the same thing two ways to emphasize how important it is, and remind us how much we need God if we're to achieve a godly level of acceptance.

B. I love the two benedictions in our text, vs. 5-6 and vs. 13. Circle them; underline them; memorize them; apply them to your daily life with people you might find difficult to invite to the celebration. (Read Romans 15:5-6)

C. As I think of some of the challenges before our congregation, I feel God led us to study this text today. As I think of the important matters we will discuss this evening at our Information Meeting, I couldn't have chosen a more timely text. At this hour in our history we need:

The endurance that God provides. It's way too early to quit. This is no time for resting on the past. The opportunities for Kingdom living are as great as ever. The party is just warming up!

The encouragement that comes from the Holy Spirit. To encourage is to come alongside. The Holy Spirit is the One who comes alongside to help. Let's come alongside one another.

The unity that comes from shared vision, shared beliefs, and shared experiences. What a testimony to the presence of God when we come together in unity! What an opportunity we have to allow God to do some of the best things among us he's ever done.

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Our earthly celebrations can be a _____ of the heavenly party that is to come – everyone’s invited

Parallel Structure of Romans 15:1-13

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Our Obligation vs. 1,2,7

The commands of God are not _____
God’s command: _____ one another. (vs. 7)

Illustration vs. 3,8,9a

Jesus showed “acceptance” by _____ himself

“Dear friends, if God so loved us, we also ought to _____ one another.” I John 4:11

Supporting Evidence vs. 4,9b-12

Accepting one another has been God’s _____ all along
Jews and Gentiles had a great level of _____ for one another

Paul uses all three parts of the O.T. _____
_____ Psalms Deut
Isaiah

Positive Application vs. 5,6,13

Three challenges to accepting/loving one another:

- God’s Word _____ it
- Christ’s life _____ it
- The Scriptures _____ it

Three resources God offers to us (vs. 5-6):

- _____
- _____
- _____

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Romans 15:13