

The Beloved Pastor's Plea for Unity

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon's sermon emphasizes the importance of unity and fellowship among believers as they are called to be saints and beloved of God.

Scripture: John 13:34-35, Romans 12:10, 1 Corinthians 1:10, Galatians 3:28, Ephesians 4:3, Philippians 2:2, Colossians 3:14, Hebrews 10:24-25, 1 Peter 3:8, 1 John 1:7

Topics: "Unity in the Church", "Fellowship among Believers"

Description

C.H. Spurgeon passionately urges the Church of Christ to embrace unity as they gather to commemorate the Lord's Supper, emphasizing that true fellowship must exist among believers. He reflects on the Apostle Paul's heartfelt desire for the Roman Christians, encouraging them to care for one another and recognize their shared identity as 'beloved of God' and 'called to be saints.' Spurgeon highlights the importance of mutual love and support within the church, reminding the congregation that their bond in Christ transcends all differences. He calls for a genuine expression of unity, rooted in the grace and peace that comes from God, as they partake in the sacred ordinance together.

Transcript

IN A FEW MINUTES we shall gather together as members of the Church of Christ to celebrate the memorial of his death. It is a memorable sight to see so many Christian people sitting together with the object of observing this ordinance. Frequently as I have seen it, I must confess that, when sitting in the chair at the head of the table, I often feel overawed with the remembrance that it is the largest gathering of Christians anywhere beneath the sun, and that they have come there with one common object, namely, to show our Lord's death "till he come."

The question then rises in our minds whether there is real fellowship in all this, for if there is not, it is a great sham; and the more numerous we are, if we have not fellowship with Christ, and with one another, the greater is the deception; it is only having a name to live while we are dead. So I want to-night, not so much to preach to you, as to exhort you, who are about to gather to this holy festival, so to think that your thoughts shall go out toward all your Christian brethren, and that you shall feel the power of that precious blood which makes us nearer akin than even the blood of Adam, that blood of Jesus, which makes us truly brethren and sisters, yea, members of one body, and so united by living communion the one to the other.

In this first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, you see the spirit of communion in the apostle Paul. He was, he says, anxious to do good to others. He longed to see the Roman Christians, in order that he might

impart to them some spiritual gift. While he is writing to them, you can see that he is anxious that they may have the best thing that they can have. All his desire is for their good; he is lovingly interested in their welfare. That is how we ought to be the one to the other, not only the pastor to the people, but the people to the pastor, and the members of the church the one towards the other, all anxious for the good of the rest; no man living unto himself, but each one endeavouring to live for the benefit of the entire community in Christ Jesus.

Not only did the apostle's heart go out to the church in Rome, but to all the Gentiles. He felt himself, he says, a debtor to everybody, to the Greeks and to the barbarians, to the wise and to the unwise, to the bond and to the free. Do you not think that our loving sympathies should go out towards all mankind? Oh, let them do so! While you have the nearest and closest fellowship with the saints, yet desire to recognize your kinship with the rest of men, praying to God that he would enlighten them, and bring them also within the bonds of the covenant, that your fellowship with them might be loving, and true, and deep.

However, the apostle especially expresses his fellowship with the saints in Rome, and to prove that fellowship he calls them by endearing names, by the highest titles which they could have, "beloved of God, called to be saints;" and then he salutes them with good wishes of the very sweetest, tenderest kind, when he says, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." While I am trying to talk on this text, will our dear brethren and sisters' hearts be going out the one towards the other, with a view to the increase of real spiritual communion in this church, and also in every branch of the one Church of Christ throughout the world?

First, notice, concerning these people, their favoured condition: "beloved of God;" secondly, their sure proof of that favour: "called to be saints;" and, thirdly, their blessedness through that favour. Paul wished them to have what he was allowed to wish for them, for it was truly theirs, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." I. First, then, notice concerning these people, THEIR FAVOURED CONDITION. They are said to be "beloved of God." I wish that I could hope that this was true of everybody here, in the fullest and most emphatic sense, that we were all "beloved of God."

There is a sense in which it is true, for God has a love of benevolence, and kindness, and well-wishing towards all his creatures. He is kind to the unthankful and the evil, and makes his rain to fall upon the field of the miser as well as on the ground of the gracious. He is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." God is willing that all should come to him, repent of sin, believe in Jesus Christ, and find eternal life. We are all, in some respects, partakers of the love of God.

But, dear friends, there is a love to Peter which is greater than the love which Christ had to Judas. There is a love which he has to his own, which is of peculiar character, and differs very greatly from that common love which he bestows upon all the works of his hands, for there is a love of choice, and it is in this sense that Paul calls these Roman saints "beloved of God." God had chosen them; his prescient eye had foreseen them, and their condition, and he had selected them out of the mass of the Roman population that they might be his own.

Whatever may be said about the doctrine of election, it is written in the Word of God as with an iron pen, and there is no getting rid of it; there it stands. To me, it is one of the sweetest and most blessed truths in the whole of Revelation; and those who are afraid of it are so because they do not understand it. If they could but know that the Lord had chosen them, it would make their hearts to dance for joy. The Lord has a people in this world, whom he has himself chosen, and given to his Son Jesus Christ, and whom the Lord

Jesus Christ has redeemed from among men, for Christ "loved the church, and gave himself for it."

These are the people of whom Paul speaks as beloved of God, those who have been, by divine grace, chosen out of the great mass of mankind. Beware, I pray you, of that desperately evil thing which is everywhere now, "the Christian world." There is no mixture that can be so bad as that. If it be the world, it is the world; if it be Christian, it is not the world; and the two things cannot be bound together. There is a divorce proclaimed between the two. Our Lord Jesus proclaimed it when he said, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world;" and he was never of the world.

Nobody ever thought that he was of the world; and so his followers, if they are true to him, are not of the world. They are of another race. As the apostle John says, "Ye know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one." It is not, as some one said the other day, "a redeemed world"; it is a world that lieth in the wicked one, as a child lies in its father's arms. There is a redeemed people in it, whom Christ is calling out by his own wondrous and sovereign grace; but we are not to look upon them as tasting of the benefits of his redemption in any saving way until he calls them to faith in himself, and brings them to be washed in his precious blood.

Then may they, indeed, be called "beloved of God." These are, again, beloved with a love of resolve. He determined concerning those whom he loved that they should be saved, that they should repent, that they should accept the great Sacrifice. He ordained them unto eternal life, and he resolved so to work upon them that, while he did not violate the freedom of their wills, or treat them otherwise than as men, yet still he would accomplish his purpose with them, he would create in them a new heart and a right spirit, he would turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to himself.

These were the beloved of the Lord. And in consequence they came to be the beloved of God in another sense, namely, with a love of complacency. The Lord cannot love a wicked man with the love of complacency. He takes no delight in him; he cannot even look on him without abhorrence, for he provokes the Lord to anger by his iniquity. But there are men in the world in whom the Holy Spirit has wrought principles which delight God. He has given them a character which is pleasing to him.

They are his Hephzibahs; his delight is in them. There are some, of whom he thinks with pleasure, though they were once sinful and vile as others. He has transformed them into new creatures in Christ Jesus, and now he delights in them. I do not know a more joyful thought than for a man to be led to believe that God takes complacency in him, and looks at him with the eye of loving approval. Such as he are the beloved of the Lord. And because of this, dear friends, there was also a love of unity.

God joins himself to the man in whom he takes delight. There is a friendship between them more close than that between David and Jonathan, so that God speaks with his servant, and hears what his servant has to say in reply. There are men who are on such intimate terms with God that they might be called the friends of God, as Abraham was; and God is both their shield, and their exceeding great reward. Oh, did some of you know what a joy it is to be the beloved of the Lord, you would reckon yourselves to be wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, while you are without him; and you would reckon that, even if you were poor, and blind, and naked, yet you would not be wretched and miserable if you did but know this wondrous love of God, which leads to the friendship of God, and to fellowship with God.

There are many men and women, nowadays, thank God, who have a place where they are accustomed to meet with God, quite as regularly as they meet with their fellow-tradesmen at their stall or at their office.

They keep tryst with God; and it would be a doleful day to them if, on any occasion, they should go to wait upon God, and find that he had closed the door against them. Yes, we have in London, and all over the world, a multitude who may truly be called the beloved of the Lord.

This is a very choice privilege; if you possess it, prize it beyond everything else. This is a crowning honour. Perhaps, if you were invited to attend the Queen, you might think something of it; but what would that be compared with being beloved of God? To have the love of our fellow-men, is very sweet; there are times when it comes with peculiar pleasantness; but oh, believe me, all the loves of all relationships, all the loves of all friendships heaped together, can never be compared with the love of God to us!

All the goodness that there is in human love is derived from the love of God; and is at best but as a drop compared with the boundless ocean. If thou art beloved of God, I will not stay to ask whether thou art rich or poor, or even whether thou art in good health or in sickness, neither will I enquire whether thou art in honour or in disrepute, or whether thy life is likely to be long or to be suddenly cut short. All these things are but trifles; this is the solid fact that makes thee a happy and a blessed man, that thou canst be called "beloved of God."

Now the sweet thing here is that, if I am beloved of God, and you are beloved of God, here is a ground for us to meet. If you have not yet learnt to know your brother, if he is a stranger to you, and if, because of this, no love has actually sprung up in your heart, yet, since Christ loves you, when you hear that Christ loves him, why, then you will seem at once knit to him! I recollect that, when I first came to London, I used to think a great deal of everybody who came up from Waterbeach.

I believe that, if a dog had come up from Waterbeach, I should have fed him; and I think that, if anybody comes from where Christ is, the Christ who loves us, we shall be sure to love him. They who are beloved of God will love all others who are beloved of God. "But they are American friends." Never mind whether they are American or Dutch; if the Lord loves them, we love them. "Oh, but they live so many thousands of miles away; and they never come here." Never mind; what if seas and mountains divide us, yet are we one, and he who loves us loves them also.

I am sure that I appeal to you with no doubt as to what your answer will be. If God has put us within the same circle of his infinite affection, may we not safely clasp hands feeling that we shall never have to unclasp them, nay, not even in death? The relationship between a husband and a wife, between a mother and her son, may be snapped entirely by death, never to be renewed; if there is no grace in the heart of the husband or the child, the weeping and the wailing will be useless at the last.

They are parted, never to meet again; think of that, you who are still unsaved. But if we are one in Christ's love, we may have to bid "Good-bye" to one another here on earth for a time; but it is only for a time. Those bands, of which the love of God is the raw material, are everlasting. Some of you to-night, when I break the bread, will have to go upstairs, or to go home. I very often meet with good men, who come to join the church, and who say, "Nothing decided me till I had to leave my wife behind me, or when I stopped in the top gallery, and looked down upon her, and felt that I could not come and eat with her the memorial of the Lord's death.

Then I felt that I could not hold out any longer." Oh, may you have that union in the love of God which never will be broken! Seek it to-night. May we all, in these two galleries, and this great area, be encompassed within the circle of the "beloved of God"! II. Now, my second head is, THEIR SURE PROOF OF THAT FAVOUR, for they were "called to be saints": "beloved of God, called to be saints." What were

these people to whom Paul wrote? First, they were saints. You notice that the words "to be" are put in by the translators; but though they are supplied, they are not really necessary to the sense.

These believers in Rome were "called saints." They were not called because they were saints; but they became saints through that calling. Now, here is a name that belongs to all the people of God; they are saints. It is not merely "St. John", and "St. James", and so on, as some foolish people talk, who cannot call Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, by their right names, but must always "Saint" them. I believe that there is a St. John; I dare say that there are twenty St. Johns in this Tabernacle to-night.

I believe in St. Matthew; I expect that there are two or three St. Matthews here to-night. All the people of God, all who are really believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, are saints. They are all of them called saints, and we may call them so. Is not that very wonderful, that these Romans should be called saints, for they were not saints once? The Romans were among the worst of mankind. This first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans is one of the most awful that ever fell from a human pen; it so describes the infamous crimes of the Gentiles, that we might almost blush to read it in the presence of a congregation; and such were some of these people, but grace came and renewed them, and they were called saints, and really were saints, that is, dedicated persons.

A saint is a person who is set apart unto God, consecrated to God, sanctified, separated, a man who is in the world, but not of it; he belongs to God, and he lives for God. Now, if God loves you in the sense in which we have been speaking, he has made a saint of you, a dedicated man. You remember that Jonah was asked, "What is thine occupation, and of what people art thou?" and he answered, "I am an Hebrew; and I fear the Lord." That was his occupation; he was a God-fearing man.

It is not every man who could give such an answer as that. When we feel that our very occupation is to serve God, then are we rightly "called saints", sanctified, set apart ones. But the word "saints" really means also holy persons. If we are the beloved of the Lord, he will make us holy persons. There is a very wide difference between that and being merely moral. Here is a man who calls himself a saint, and he is not honest; do not call him a saint, he is not even a respectable sinner.

Here is a man who says he is a child of God, and yet he is guilty of lewdness. Call him a saint, when even common morality is absent? Dear friends, all the charity we can possibly pump up will not allow us to call that man a holy man who is not even a moral man. What is holiness, then? It rises above morality as much as the heaven rises above the earth. Holiness is a more spiritual, a more intense, a more divine, a more heavenly thing than morality; but he who has not morality certainly falls very short of anything like holiness.

We are called not merely to be moralists, but to be saints. If you go, to-morrow, into some place of amusement, where there is something not quite clean, something full of levity, I should like somebody to whisper in your ear, "Called to be saints;" or, if to-morrow, in business, you should lose your temper, and begin to speak rather strongly, I should like something, even if it were only a parrot, to say, "Called to be saints;" and if, when you go home, you begin to be very rough to the children, unkind to the wife, and not what you should be even to the servant, I should like you to hear a voice saying, "Called to be saints."

It might make you blush, if you can,--there are some who cannot,--but every man, who professes to be a child of God, should recollect that this is what his calling is, and he cannot prove that he is beloved of God unless he can prove his calling to saintship by being really a saint. Oh, that we had a church all made up of saints! Our churches, nowadays, are very respectable communities, I do not doubt, and there is a good

deal of sainthood in them; but, oh, if they were all saints, then indeed we should tell upon the world, and tell upon the age, and the kingdom of our Lord would come!

They were saints, then, to whom Paul wrote. He also says that they were "called to be saints." They were not saints originally; they were "called to be saints." They were not saints by their own native growth, they did not grow up into saints; they were "called to be saints." They were called of Christ himself. Read the sixth verse: "Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ." Being called by Jesus Christ, they were called by a voice which they recognized, a voice to which they yielded, a voice that spoke effectually, a voice that spoke transformingly; and they were called by him to be saints.

Have you ever had such a call, my dear hearer? Sitting in your pew to-night, can you remember when that call came to you, as real a call as when God called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, a call from heaven, mysterious, divine, which nobody else could hear, but which you heard and obeyed? "Called to be saints." Now, then, see a ground of our communion one with another. If I have had a call to be a saint, I should not like to talk much about that to some people whom I know, for they would call it fanaticism.

If you have had a call to be a saint, you have been very much in the same state; but when you and I meet together, we are not afraid to talk about it. You understand it, and I understand it; and on the ground of having had a common call, we feel ourselves at home. We are brothers and sisters at once, because we are equally "called to be saints." You cry and you sigh for saintship, and your friend cries and sighs for saintship, too. He is conscious that he comes short of his own idea of it; he struggles, he groans.

You and he have a secret between you; your experience is his experience, and you two feel, having equally received a call from God, and a call for the same purpose, that you should both become the same thing, namely, saints unto God. Here is ground for fellowship. The lambs can have no fellowship with the wolves; let them keep together, and have fellowship one with another. You who love God will not find much fellowship up and down these streets. In many of the houses, if you were to speak of God, they would ridicule you.

Get all the fellowship that you can one with another. Let it be said of you, as of those of old, "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name." I like to think of this, that as we are one in being the beloved of the Lord, so are we one in the outcome of it; we have all been called, and we have all been called to the same high attainment of saintship.

Paul does not say that he alluded to "the upper ten" at Rome; no, but he says, "To all that be in Rome, beloved of God." Do not you go about, and pick out a few of the best Christian people, and say, "I am in sympathy with them." Ah, dear friends, this is not like Christ; he washed his disciples' feet, but you are for looking up at their heads! Go and begin fellowship with him by washing his dear feet. Where there is aliquid Christi, as a good man used to say, anything of Christ, there should your love go forth.

Where there is any work of Christ upon the soul of anyone, however uneducated, however poor, however rough he may be, ay, and however bad-tempered he may be, nevertheless endeavour to get to maintain and to increase fellowship with him, seeing that you and he have one calling, you are both "called to be saints." III. Now I come to a close with the third point, where I think we shall also find some ground for fellowship, THEIR BLESSEDNESS THROUGH THE FAVOUR OF GOD. This was the same with regard to all to whom Paul wrote: "To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ."

First, these good people had this blessedness, they all had the same Father. Suppose that two persons were to meet here to-night, who did not know each other, and they were to begin to talk to one another, and one said, "My father's name is So-and-so," and the other were to look at him, and say, "And where does he live?" "He lives at such a house, in such a city." "Does he? Why, do you know, that is my father?" Those two would be surprised that they did not know each other, for they evidently had the same father.

I can see them backing a bit, and looking at one another, and saying, "Do you mean to say that really his name is John Smith?" "Yes." "And he lives at such a house?" "Yes." "What age is he? What kind of a man is he? Have you his portrait about you?" "Yes." "There, I have a good portrait of him, too, and it is the same man. He is father to us both; then what are we two?" "We are brothers;" and they put their arms about each other's neck, and say, "What have we been at, that, having the same father, we did not know each other?"

Now, there are many Christian people who, if they came right, would be in much the same condition. They have the same Father, and do not know it, because they do not quite agree, perhaps, upon some form of doctrine, or even upon the rite of baptism, or something of that sort, which is of very great importance, but still the most important thing is,--Have we one Father? If we have, then let us have fellowship one with the other. I want this to be real. When I was very young, and first joined the church in Cambridge, I sat in a pew at the communion with a gentleman, perhaps with two or three, but none of them spoke to me.

The next time I went to the communion, it was the same, nobody spoke to me. I was not anybody to be spoken to; so when I got outside the chapel, I said to one gentleman, "Well, dear sir, how are you?" He said, "I am pretty well, thank you, but you have the advantage of me." "I do not think I have, sir; I do not know you any more than you know me; but I came to the communion-table to profess that I was a brother of those who were there, and I meant it; did not you mean it?" He put both his hands on me, for he was much older than I was, and he said, "What sweet simplicity!

You have only acted according to truthfulness. I am glad," he added, "that you did not do it to our deacon." The next thing he said was, "Will you come in and have a cup of tea with me?" I said, "Thank you, sir, I could not do that to-night, because I am expected home at the place where I live." "Will you come in next Sunday?" "Yes." I continued to go in every Sunday as long as I could, and he remained, and does remain, a dear friend of mine to this day. Though he is very much older than I am, I established a friendship with him which never has been interrupted, and never will be, either in time or in eternity.

Should it not be thus among all Christians? Is the Fatherhood of God a reality among the children of God? If it is, let their brotherhood be a reality, and let them show that they are true brothers by their love one to another. May the Lord make it so! The common talk of the universal fatherhood of God is a flat contradiction of the teaching of the Bible. There is certainly in God's Word such a doctrine as adoption. Does God adopt his own children, then? There is certainly a revelation about the new birth.

What are the regenerated born into, then? Only into the same nature as they had before? Is there anything fresh given to them which makes them to have the nature of the children of God? I thought, and I still think, that it was meant that, until then, they were heirs of wrath, children of disobedience, even as others, and children of the wicked one; but by no means children of the family of the Most High. By grace alone could the saints in Rome call God, "Abba, Father." The next point in their blessedness was that they had the same Saviour, for so says the text, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ."

He who died for Paul died for them. The streams of blood, that flowed for the apostle, flowed for them. For them the bloody sweat, for all of them; for them the death cry, "It is finished," for all of them; and truly, I do think that, being bought with the same price, ought to make us feel that we are all one lump. We were all passed over to Christ by the one transaction of the paying down of his heart's blood to redeem us, and we ought to feel, nay, brothers and sisters, I hope that we do feel that we are all one, and we will endeavour as much as lieth in us to show this in our lives.

And, more than that, they were going to the same heaven. Beloved, the home of God should be the great goal to which we are always pressing forward. You see that the men of the world are coming this way in a great crowd, all in a hurry, rushing after their gods; and we, what are we doing? Threading our way, as best we can, pushing our way against the stream, going in an exactly opposite direction to the rest of mankind. Some of you cannot do this; you keep getting carried off your legs, and you are swept along by the torrent; but the man of God must go against the current.

He is not to be swept back; but he is always pressing forward, ever seeking to make an advance, contending for every inch, and making up his mind that, come what may, he cannot go back. That is not his way; he must go forward, ever pressing on toward the city that hath foundations. Christians are like a live fish that goes up the stream, always up the stream. If the fish comes down the stream, and you see it floating with its white belly on the top of the water, you know that it is dead; and we can see plenty of these dead fish floating down the stream nowadays.

But the live Christian is going straight up the stream, straight up, up, up. Whichever way the tide may be running, whether it is at the ebb or at the flood, he is going straight up the stream; and, God helping him, he will proceed in that way right to the end. So, brethren, as we are going to the same heaven, let us have heaven begun below as we live in love one towards another. These saints, also, had the same grace. I cannot stop to say much about it; but Paul wished for them all that they might have "grace."

If you have grace, and I have grace, the grace is the same in us all. It may take a different shape as to the fruit that it produces; but grace is one. Whether it is grace in the babe in Christ, or grace in the strong man in Christ, it is the same grace; and if we all are debtors to grace, and if grace begins, and grace carries on, and grace completes its work in us all, let us, by the bonds of that grace, be knit together in mutual affection the one towards the other. And then they all had the same peace.

Oh, what a blessed thing is peace with God, peace with our own conscience, peace with the past, peace with the present, peace with the future, the peace of God, which passeth all understanding! Hast thou peace, brother, and have I peace? Then let us be as one, for we have the same peace. You must have noticed, in times of peril, how men are driven into each other's arms. If you are on board ship, and the vessel is ready to go down, his lordship will be seen at the pumps working as hard as any sweep who may be on board.

Everybody must share alike when they divide the biscuit, and everybody must take his turn at working in the saving of the ship. Well, well, if it be so in time of danger, let it be so in time of peace. Let us have an equally hearty communion and fellowship the one with the other in happy times and under sad circumstances as well. So have I tried to prepare you to come to this feast. If any of you have any ill-will towards the others, have done with it. If there are any bickerings and jealousies among you, wring the necks of those evil birds, and have done with them; put them to a speedy death.

Now, surely, is the time, when we come to the common table of the Lord's one family, to feel that one heart is in us all, and that by him who loved us all, and through him whom we all love, we will love each other. God grant it! I am not aware that there is any special reason now why I should urge you to this unity more than at any other time; but there is always a reason for it. There is never a company of men and women, so large as ours, but what they have little jealousies between them, and you may be quite sure that these are displeasing to God, and should be put away as speedily as possible. So let it be, and thus may we keep the feast in union with Christ, and with one another, for our Saviour's sake! Amen.

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