

Welcome One Another for the Glory of God

by John Piper

John Piper emphasizes the importance of welcoming one another for the glory of God, following Christ's example of self-denial and love.

Duration: 40:26

Scripture: Romans 15:1

Topics: "Selfless Love", "Christian Character"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses five helpful things that Paul teaches in the Bible to help us become selfless and focused on pleasing others. The first point is that having hope in God allows us to not constantly seek to please ourselves. The second point emphasizes the importance of love and its connection to hope. The third point highlights the significance of prayer in our journey towards selflessness. The fourth point emphasizes the role of Scripture in shaping our character and guiding us towards self-denial. The speaker concludes by urging listeners to seek a deeper knowledge of Jesus and to not neglect the teachings of Scripture.

Transcript

The following message is by Pastor John Piper. More information from *Desiring God* is available at www.desiringgod.org Today's scripture passage comes from Romans 15, 1-7. If you're reading along in your pew bibles, it's found on page 949.

So Romans 15, 1-7. We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.

For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me. For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus.

Together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you for the glory of God. Let's pray together.

Father, it's very clear from those last two verses that your burden and the burden of the Apostle Paul is that you might be glorified. Welcome one another to the glory of God as Christ has welcomed you. With

one voice that you might glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Glorify me, glorify me, says the Lord. Father, I pray that we would become the kind of church that in every facet of our life together would make much of you, that your glory and beauty and greatness would shine. That we would be known, if we're known for anything, as a church that is besotted with the glory of God.

Enthralled with the glory of God. Loves to delight in and make much of the glory of God. Let that be the mark, the signature, the flavor, the atmosphere of our church, I pray.

We don't want it to be about us, or merely about a book called the Bible, or about ministry mainly. We want it to be about you and how magnificent you are, how majestic you are. How stunningly, enthrallingly, all satisfyingly glorious you are.

And so come and use this text now, in my effort to open it, to bring that about in our church, I pray. In Jesus' name, Amen. So we're moving now into chapter 15 of Romans.

And you need to be aware that the chapter divisions in the Bible and the verse divisions in the Bible did not originate with the writers of the Bible. The chapter divisions originated in 1205 A.D. And the verse divisions originated in the New Testament in 1551. And therefore, if you ever find, as we do here, that it's not a good place to divide, you can just ignore it and be okay.

It won't offend God in the least. He did not put this in the inspired book. This is later, and I think this is a bad division here.

I don't think chapter 15 should break here, because there's not even a hint of break. This is Paul pressing right on with the issue of weak and strong, those whose consciences are bothering them about eating meat and drinking certain things and days. And this is just the same old issue.

It's going to go right on through. You could break it at verse 7 maybe. I think probably verse 13 would be a better break.

But we won't worry too much about that. I just want you to know that we're on the same issue now that we've been on in all of chapter 14. So let's see how he makes the point, a very familiar point, in verses 1 and 2. Let's read that.

We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Let us, let each of us please his neighbor for his good to build him up. Now that's not new.

Chapter 14, verse 15. If your brother is grieved by what you eat, you're no longer walking in love. Or chapter 14, verse 19.

Let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual up building. Verse 21 of chapter 14. It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble.

So clearly the message has been resounding through these chapters. Inconvenience yourself in order to make peace, build up, not destroy or hurt a weaker brother. He does say something a little different, however, in verses 1 and 2. And it's this issue of not pleasing ourselves.

He hasn't used that language before. It's implied, I think. But here he makes it explicit.

Don't please yourself. Please your neighbor for his good to up build him. And so I want to pause on that and make two clarifications.

Because I think you could go in two very wrong directions with that advice. Please your neighbor. Right? That would be a pretty sweeping way to judge how you should act.

Please your neighbor. Don't please yourself. Now I think both of those are in need of clarification.

So here's clarification number one. The issue of pleasing another means in the case of non-essentials like food and drink and days, forego your own liberty and please them rather than destroy them. It is not saying make what makes another person happy the moral criterion of all your judgments.

And the reason I know that is because of Galatians chapter 1 verse 10 where Paul says this, Am I trying to please man? If I were trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ. That's pretty plain. So here he is in chapter 15 saying please your neighbor for his good.

And in chapter 1 verse 10 of Galatians saying if I make it my aim to please man, I'm not a servant of Jesus. So you've got to say now what? Come on Paul, this is double talk. What's going on? And the answer is not hard to come by.

What's going on in Galatians is people are calling gospel issues into question. They want to circumcise Titus because circumcision is necessary for salvation. And Paul's not going to please them.

He's going to make them real unhappy. Because bigger issues than meat and drink and days are at stake. So I think the clarification that's needed is when you can do good for your neighbor by pleasing him, resulting in the up-building of his faith, do it.

But if pleasing him will destroy him, don't do it. So you can see that pleasing somebody is not the ultimate criterion of what we do. It is one test of what we do when other things are in place to make it helpful and fitting.

That's the first clarification I think we need. Here's the second one. When it says, as it does here, the end of verse 1, not to please ourselves, that does not mean it's wrong to enjoy making sacrifices to build people up, which it could easily be taken to mean.

I grew up thinking that. That self-denial means this cannot be pleasurable. If it is, it's sin.

Because it says not to please yourself. And if you're not to please yourself, if I'm getting some delight out of this late-night sacrificial delivery, I'm a sinner. That's wicked.

That kind of thinking is wicked. It's demonic. And I don't know why it took me so long to catch on to the fact that it's not sin to enjoy doing good, even if it's costly.

Now, that's not just my opinion. First of all, let me affirm it. Let me affirm it because I'm a Christian hedonist.

So everybody expects me to say this. But I want to make sure I let Paul say what he says. Don't please yourself.

That's simply an echo of what teaching in Jesus' mouth, right? Jesus said, whoever would be my disciple, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. So self-denial and cross-bearing hurts. It hurts to be a Christian.

Christianity involves lots of pain. Paul said, this is church planting 101 for the Apostle Paul. In Acts 14.22, he went back through every church telling them, through many tribulations you must enter the kingdom of heaven.

It's a given. So I'm saying, amen, Paul, amen. There are many, many choices we must make that hurt us.

However, Paul said in Romans 5.3, rejoice in tribulation. Oh, well now it's okay then to please yourself if the sacrifice that you're making for the brother gives you deep delight in the work of God in your life and the benefit He may receive. In fact, I'm just going to say, if you don't get any delight in loving people at cost to yourself, you're in big trouble morally.

If your whole life is one of begrudging good deeds, the only good deed you know how to perform is a begrudging one, gutting out willpower obedience, no delight. You're in big trouble. Because the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field, which a man for joy went and sold all that he had.

That is not pleasing yourself. I like my car. I like my computer.

I like my books. I like my wedding ring. I like America.

And I'm letting it all go because I found a kingdom and I found a way to live that goes down deeper than anything this bauble laden land of ours could ever do. So that's the second clarification. When he says, don't please yourself, he means many things are hard to do in the Calvary road of love.

But on that road there are joys that people off that road will never taste. It is more blessed to what? Give than to receive. It just feels so good to receive.

But the blessedness, the depths of joy that we're talking about. So those are the two clarifications. Now here is the question.

Where is he going in these verses and how does he want us to get there? Where he's going is real clear. I've already prayed about it. Verses six and seven make it crystal clear.

He says it twice. Here's where he's going. Verse six.

That together you may with one voice glorify the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ. So we're going there. We're going there.

I'm aiming at the glory of God, the father and our Lord Jesus Christ and verse seven. Therefore, welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you for the glory of God. So he says it twice.

Glorify the God and father of our Lord Jesus for six for the glory of God. Verse seven. That's where we're going as a church.

Paul's goal is never merely good human relationships. Never. Unless you define good human relationships as God centered, Christ exalting, Bible saturated human relationships.

Which you should. That is what a good relationship is. A relationship is good when Christ is being magnified in it and by it.

That's the best human relationships. But the ultimate aim of everything Paul does and says and in the church. Is to display the glory of God, the beauty of God, the greatness of God, the many sided perfections of God.

All of creation, all of redemption, all the church, all of society, all of culture exists to display God. Nothing and no one is an end in itself. I remember in college.

People used to say art for art's sake. Sounds atheistic to me. I think art for God's sake.

What does God have to do with art for art's sake? Now, I know what they were saying. They were saying not for money. And that's right.

But I'll never be satisfied with terms like art for art's sake. Not after these verses. It's art for God's sake or I'm not interested.

Everything, everything in culture, in church is to display God. All things are from him and through him and to him. Romans 11 36 church worship services, Sunday school classes, committee meetings, nurseries, small group evangelism, church missions.

All of them exist for one ultimate thing, namely to make much of the greatness of God. That mission statement, I have never, ever tired of since it was crafted in 1995. We exist as a church to spread a passion for the supremacy of God, the glory of God, the magnificence of God.

That's why we exist, going to spread passion for the supremacy of God, the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ. That is a paraphrase of verse six here. Would you Bethlehem join me in praying for this at Bethlehem? The atmosphere that we long for is an atmosphere of radical God centeredness.

We will not have succeeded as a church if we're known as a friendly church. And we will certainly not have succeeded if we're known for being an unfriendly church. Neither is success.

We'll be well on our way to success if we are known as a people besotted with the glory of God, enthralled with the glory of God. If our children, let's test ourselves now. If our children are talking about the glory of God and love the glory of God.

If our young people love the glory of God more than the glory of sport or music or fashion. If our career people pursue the glory of God with more energy than they pursue financial success in their careers. If our old people rejoice in the glory of God just over the horizon.

Then we might be approaching some measure of success as a church. And the reason I plead with you to pray with me and work toward this is because almost everything in American culture is against it. Almost everything in this world of ours, this particular world, might be a little different in Pakistan right now.

Almost everything in American culture threatens radically serious God centered passion to see and savor and show Jesus Christ. His greatness, his beauty, his worth, his perfections, his eternal being, his unchanging character, his independence, his self-sufficiency and holiness. His infinite power and wisdom and goodness and justice and wrath and mercy and patience and grace and love.

Almost everything in American culture threatens to make our devotion and our services and our mind and our heart shallow, casual, chatty. I can't believe the pressure on these services to make them chatty, casual, living room like, friendly, and above all, our blessing of choice, fun. I can't believe how that word has come to dominate Christian vocabulary about spiritual things.

It is so absolutely misused. We've even made it an adjective to define anything that we enjoy because we don't have anything greater to say. America is all about that, all of television, all the internet just about everything.

Everywhere you turn is casual, entertainment, fun, thin, shallow, trifling, trivial. So that it becomes almost impossible for people in this room right now to even conceive what I'm talking about, let alone go there. So that's where we're going.

Paul knew that it was hard to get people there. He says in Ephesians 1, in a kind of prayer longing, that you might be given a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of God. Paul just ached that the churches would have a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of God.

Because if God doesn't give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of God, you won't know him. He will be just chatty, little, maybe like grandpa, and you'll be way more emotionally moved on Thanksgiving by football. Now, how do you get there? Here, this text is so rich.

I have five things I see here that Paul does because he loves us and wants to help us get there. And every one of them could be and has been a book. So I will not begrudge taking one or two minutes on each, just one or two minutes on each.

Five helps that Paul gives us in this text to get to the place where we become the kind of person who does not please himself, but rather takes delight in pleasing our neighbor for his good, that his faith might be built up so that we, together with him, with one mindset, might make much of God to his glory. That's what we're after. I want to be that kind of person.

I believe you do too. So how do you become that kind of person? Number one, he draws our attention to Christ and gives us an example that is not just Christ doing what we should do, which it is true, but what he did for us as well. Verse three, for Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, the reproaches of those who reproach you, God fell on me, Christ, quote Psalm 69.

In other words, to become the kind of person who joyfully serves others at expense to yourself. You look at Christ, look at him. And here, Paul, he's writing the New Testament, so instead of quoting it, he quotes the old covenant.

Psalm 69.9, to point to Christ. Now, we've got four gospels. Unbelievable what we have to look at Christ.

There's one of the women in this church who reads a gospel a day. That's not foolish. Do you see him? Paul said, beholding the glory of the Lord, we are being changed from one degree of glory to the next.

This comes from the spirit who is the Lord. Seeing him sanctifies us. Beholding him makes us become like him.

Are you giving yourself to know Jesus? That's number one. Number two, Paul reminds us how essential the scriptures are in becoming self-denying servants of love. Since he quoted the Old Testament in verse

three, he now says this in verse four.

Four, whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction. So, the picture of Jesus that he just gave us in verse three comes from scripture. And so, he pauses to just linger on the implication of that.

All that has ever been written in scripture was written for your instruction. Don't neglect it. They are very powerful.

Number three, Paul pinpoints what it is about the scripture that has this effect on us to make us the kind of people who don't please ourselves but please others for their good, for our building. Continuing in verse four, what is it? Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction. That through the endurance and through the encouragement of the scriptures.

Stop there. Let those two words sink in. The endurance and the encouragement of the scriptures.

I take that to mean that God designed the Bible to display and produce endurance and encouragement. So that when you're reading the Bible rightly, story after story, book after book, the effect it has is to help you endure and to help you be encouraged. If it's not having that effect, you're not reading it right.

Because Paul said, and he knows, that's what it's for. That's why God inspired it. God means for us to read Genesis to Malachi and Matthew to Revelation and come away persevering, enduring with some metal in our bones and some encouragement in our hearts to fight another day.

That's what it's for. So if you're not getting that, start over and read it another way. Ask God for that.

Ask him, Lord, that's why you wrote it. Make it happen when I read it. Number four.

Paul reminds us that we will never survive on the pathway of self-denying love without hope. So let's read that. All of verse four now.

Whoever, I'm sorry, for whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through the endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures, we might have hope. Hope that everything's going to work together for our good and hope that we will wind up with God in heaven, not in hell. Now, how did Jesus endure the reproaches of the devil and the sin of man? How did he endure Gethsemane and how did he endure Golgotha? Hebrews 12, 2 tells us it was hope.

It was hope. I'll read that to you. Who, for the joy that was set before him, that's hope.

Joy set before you is hope. He endured the cross. For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross.

That's the only way you can endure your cross. If you can't see Sunday coming, Friday's going to be real hard. Actually, before I ever heard that sermon, Sunday's coming, I always thought Friday was the best day of the week myself because I hated school.

The only way I endured Monday was Friday. It's coming. It's going to be another week I play ball.

I hated school. So that was kind of a little paradigm for me to live life for Friday. But now I know Friday is when Jesus died and Sunday's coming.

And so we endure Friday by hope. This is very, very intentional on Paul's part. Let me read you a verse from Colossians 1, 4. It goes like this.

We heard the love that you have for all the saints because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. You see the connection between love and hope? We've heard how you love each other because of the hope laid up in heaven. It's when you have hope that you don't need to please yourself all the time.

You can take delight in the hope. Let the delight in hope stream back to give you the strength to inconvenience yourself and live a life of not pleasing yourself, letting yourself endure all kinds of sufferings and inconveniences because you've got this great hope. Friday's coming.

I can do my assignment on Tuesday. And now finally, number five. I wonder what you think I'm going to say.

Your eyes scouring the text. Where is number five? What is the fifth thing he does here to help us? And that's exactly the right way to say it. It's something he does, not something he says.

In verse five and six, what does he start doing? He starts praying. Did you notice that? Paul has run out of horizontal resources. He's done all he can do in this chapter to try to change these people into people who are weak and strong, love each other and are patient with each other and don't hurt each other and build each other up and inconvenience themselves for each other.

And now he knows he's beyond himself. And so he begins to ask God to do it. Verse five.

May the God of endurance and encouragement. He's the one who inspired that book to do that. He's the one that makes it happen.

May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such... Grant you. Do this, God. Grant you to live in such harmony with one another in accord with Jesus Christ that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, I know he's still speaking to them. This is one of these bi-directional prayers. It's usually called a benediction or a blessing.

He's talking to them in the second person, you, and he's saying, may God do this, God do this. He's got... it's like a triangle, right? I'm saying you and I'm saying God, do it. So there's just the two... I can't remember my geometry here.

What are these called? The two halves of the right triangle and then the hypotenuse. Is that what it is? I can't believe I remembered that. Hypotenuse.

So the hypotenuse is the power of God coming down here. And I'm saying, God, do it. You, let him do it.

That's the only hope. That's the only hope. So let me just summarize.

If we are going to look at Christ... These are my five helps. If we're going to look at Christ, God has to incline us to look at Christ. You're not going to go home tonight and read your Bible looking for Christ unless God does it.

If we're going to meditate on his word, God must incline our hearts to his word. If we're going to find encouragement and perseverance and endurance there, God's got to work that endurance and encouragement in us. And if we're going to have hope while we inconvenience ourselves and take pain upon our lives in order to be a blessing, then we've just got to have hope and God is the one who hopes.

That's why I think the paragraph really might end at verse 13. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. Because hope is the only way we could possibly love each other like this.

If you're a despairing person and you have no future, you're just going to eke out a living for yourself and be all self-consumed. But if you've got hope, you can do this. So, if we are so dependent for God to do Romans 14 and 15, to make it true at Bethlehem, then let's join Paul in praying.

Take your worship folder. I'm going to show you something. This is my last comment.

I'm going to put feet on that exhortation by taking you to whatever these pages are. If you open it up on the inside to the column called Event Calendar. Are you with me on Event Calendar? North Campus, you with me? If you long your eyes down, I make it easy for myself by circling them.

You know how many prayer meetings there are listed here? Twelve. 7 a.m. Monday morning, both campuses. Prayer.

That's one and two. 6.30 Tuesday morning, prayer. That's three.

6.30 a.m. both campuses. That's four and five. 5.45 Wednesday, both campuses.

That's six and seven. Thursday, 6.30 a.m. That's eight. 6.30 Friday, prayer.

That's nine. Saturday, 4.45. That's just before this service. I invite you to come downstairs with us.

Prayer. That's number ten. Sunday morning before first service, here.

That's tomorrow morning. That's eleven. And Sunday before first service, north.

That's 8.15. That's twelve. I go to five of those every week. They're all 30 minutes long.

I love them. Nobody makes me get out of bed to go to those prayer meetings. No staff even gives a hoot whether I go or not.

I just go and get my socks blessed. I really want you to pray for Bethlehem. That we would be radically God-centered.

That we would be Christ-exalting. That we would be self-denying. That we would delight to give rather than to be made comfortable.

And that we would please our neighbor for his good and his outbuilding. That the same mindset might come together. The weak and the strong with all their differences remaining.

Glorifying the same God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. That will not happen without prayer. And I think corporate prayer in groups 12 times a week.

For you to pick one or two is a wonderful way to do it. Let's pray. So Father in heaven, I am deeply thankful for Bethlehem.

I didn't create these prayer meetings. One of them I did about 15 years ago. The one on Friday morning.

The rest of them your people created. So I bless you. And I ask that we would be a praying people.

That we would get to the end of our longings. The exhortations of our children to our children. The exhortations to our spouses.

The exhortations to our small groups. And know nothing is going to happen here unless God. Now may God grant you to be of one mind with each other.

May He grant one mind. May He grant self-denial. May He grant looking at Christ.

May He grant reading the scriptures. May He grant you to be enduring and encouraged. May He grant you to have hope.

May He grant you to sacrifice. May He grant you one mind. May He give you the ability to deal with your differences.

May you come in one mind. May God you get glory from this people. Because the giver gets the glory.

Lord make us a praying people. As we come to the end of 2005. Let there be fewer regrets.

Because this sermon awakened a good years end of praying. I ask this in Jesus name. Amen.

Thank you for listening to this message by John Piper. Pastor for preaching at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Feel free to make copies of this message to give to others.

But please do not charge for those copies or alter the content in any way without permission. We invite you to visit Desiring God online at www.desiringgod.org. There you will find hundreds of sermons, articles, radio broadcasts and much more. All available to you at no charge.

Our online store carries all of Pastor John's books, audio and video resources. You can also stay up to date on what's new at Desiring God. Again our website is www.desiringgod.org. Or call us toll free at 1-888-346-4700.

Our mailing address is Desiring God 2601 East Franklin Avenue, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55406. Desiring God exists to help you make God your treasure. Because God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/12/SID12859.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-piper/welcome-one-another-for-the-glory-of-god/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net