

“THE JOY OF FELLOWSHIP”

Romans 15:22-33

Message 1899

When the angel came to the shepherds there on the hillside outside the town of Bethlehem many years ago, he said to the shepherds, “A Saviour is born,” for, “I bring you good tidings of great joy.” So there is joy. When the angel announced the coming of the Saviour, he said it was news of great joy.

Today the world is running over with sorrow, running over with pain, running over with distress. Where is the joy? Why is there so much sorrow, pain and distress? The reason is simple. Joy can be found only in Jesus Christ. That is what the angel said: the Saviour brings great joy.

Joy comes with fellowship as we experience unity in Jesus Christ. I rejoice that we can have that unity, and that fellowship. The Apostle Paul teaches us how to enjoy fellowship in Romans 15:22-33.

22. *For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you.*

23. *But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you;*

24. *Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company.*

25. *But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.*

26. *For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.*

27. *It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.*

28. *When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.*

29. *And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.*

30. *Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me;*

31. *That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints;*

32. *That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed.*

33. *Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.*

In order to enjoy the fellowship in the Gospel we must cultivate these CONDITIONS.

THE UNITY OF PURPOSE needs to be cultivated to enjoy fellowship in the Gospel. I want you to see how the Apostle expressed this. He said he had a “great desire these many years to come unto you.” He wanted to meet with them, his brothers in Rome. He wanted to gather with them. He wanted to be there among them to fellowship with them. In his tireless zeal, he said he had preached the Gospel all around them but he wanted to come to them. He wanted to be with them. He wanted to preach the

Gospel to them.

He had future plans he said. His plans were that he would go to Spain. When he went to Spain he would stop by on his way to spend some time with them. He was stating this, he was writing this so that these Roman believers might be united with him in purpose.

Here is what he wished to do. Here is what his desire was. He wanted to come and be among them. He wanted to have fellowship with them. He wanted to enjoy fellowship with them. Paul asks for their unity in his purpose.

Now, friend, a condition like this will bring the joy of fellowship to you and me. When we can unite in purpose, God brings the joy of fellowship to us.

THE UNITY OF PROGRAM will need to be cultivated to enjoy fellowship in the Gospel. I was especially blessed and encouraged by how the Apostle Paul spoke of this. He said he was going to minister to the saints of Jerusalem. He was doing this because the believers in Macedonia and Achaia had given a contribution for the poor saints at Jerusalem. And the Apostle Paul was to carry this contribution to Jerusalem. He was appealing to the Roman believers to be united with him because this was the program that united Gentiles and Jews. The people of Macedonia and Achaia who most likely were Gentiles and the people of Jerusalem who were Jews were united by this program of contributing to need.

Paul explained that since the Gentiles had been made partakers of Jewish spiritual blessings, the Gospel, that the Jews in Jerusalem who were in physical need would be blessed by Gentiles meeting that need. Paul suggests it is their duty to minister unto them in carnal things. One gives the Gospel and the other gives help. You see?

Then he was also expecting that once he had performed that ministry in Jerusalem then he would come to them and they would help him go on to Spain. Unity in program I call it. He said he believed he would come in the full blessing of the Gospel of Christ. The full blessing of the Gospel of Christ comes from cultivating unity in program.

Paul asked for the unity which would bring joy and fellowship. When we are able to create that kind of unity then we shall have the joy of fellowship. And friend, you and I are sharing in this program. There is a unity program that we are sharing in and therefore we have the joy of fellowship.

THE UNITY OF PRAYER must be cultivated to come to the joy of fellowship. I am glad to come to this condition. The Apostle Paul closes his letter by making a strong appeal to the Roman believers to join him in prayer. In verse 30 it is written: "Now I beseech you." Beseech is a strong word meaning I entreat you, I beg you. "Brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me." In the Greek New Testament this word, strive, is the word from which we get our English word, agonize. I am asking you, I am begging you, I am beseeching you that you agonize with me in your prayer to God for me.

Prayer, my friend, is not play time. Prayer is agony. Prayer is work. The Apostle asks for a unity in prayer. From this springs the joy of fellowship. He asks them then to pray especially. The first prayer was that he might "be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea," the unbelievers. That is an important prayer when we pray. We should pray that we and all God's servants be delivered from unbelievers. Then Paul prayed "that his service which he has for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints." Thirdly he asked prayer "That I might come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed."

So there were three specific points, parts of his prayer: delivered from the unbelievers, that his services may be accepted and that he would be able to come to them with joy and be refreshed.

Unity in prayer brings a joy of fellowship. Paul asks for their unity in prayer and I am asking for yours now. Cultivating this condition will bring us the joy of fellowship like it brought them.

The Gospel will bring us joy in fellowship when we cultivate these conditions: unity of purpose, to proclaim the Gospel truth; unity in program, to share with each other; and unity in prayer, to agonize together for Jesus' sake.

I am asking you to stand with me. I ask you to help me to cultivate these conditions and we will have fellowship united in Jesus Christ.