

JANUARY 10, 2024 WEDNESDAY - DAY 3

PRAY THAT WE WOULD RECEIVE ONE ANOTHER

ROMANS 15:7

THE EARLY CHURCH

There were two problems in the church at Rome that prompted this command. One was the problem of legalism as addressed in Romans 14. There are many gray areas in life that the Scriptures do not directly address skirt length, hairstyle, watching movies. In the early church, the issue was whether or not to eat meat that had been offered to idols. To some it was a matter of good stewardship it was good meat at cheap prices. To others it involved what they thought was sinful accommodation.

Those strong in the faith felt they were free in Christ to partake. Never Christians were fearful they might be contaminated. Their consciences were violated. Paul's answer to both parties was to follow their own convictions, but to "accept [or receive] one another." The second problem in the early church was that of partially or prejudice. In Romans 12:16, Paul says, "Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble." The early church was guilty of prejudices: economic (Jas. 2),

Racial (Gal. 2), religious (Acts 15). The Bible is clear: "If you show partially, you commit sin" (Jas. 2:9).

Rejection often arises from a prideful heart. Where is your pride? In your pedigree? Jesus was considered the illegitimate child of a poor carpenter. In your good looks? It was said of Jesus that "he has no form of comeliness... no beauty that we should desire him" (Isa. 53:2). In your reputation? Jesus was known as a glutton, a winebibber, and a friend of sinners. In your degrees? Jesus had no formal academic training. In your popularity? Jesus "came to his own, and his own did not receive him" (John 1:11).



Many of us grew up in an era when you were accepted by other Christians base on how well you functioned with the "Do and Don't Do" list. Do be at church at least Four times per week. Do bring your Bible to church. Do keep quiet in worship services. Don't date anyone but Christians. Don't smoke, drink, dance, or chew.

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While the Bible does give us "dos" and "don'ts" they are often far different from cultural "dos" and "don'ts." If God accepts me, why would fellow believers not accept me? We strive to glorify God. We "do" whatever it takes to glorify God and "don't" do those things that keep glory from God.

THE CHURCH TODAY

The same two things that affected the early church legalism and prejudice trouble us today. In that day, it was eating meat that had been offered to idols. In our day, it is laundry list of actions.

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Many things make us different from one another. Too often we focus on these. We have more in common that can enable us, when willing, to accept one another. The ultimate purpose is "to glorify God," that is, "to bring praise to God." It wasn't as if the boy were mean or slow or ugly. It was just that he didn't fit. He tried to fit in, to find his place of acceptance in the youth group. The Pastor tried to take him and other boys under his wing. He called them his "preacher boys" and took them with him to rallies and conferences and let them take turns reading Scripture, leading music, and even preaching. But somehow Larry just didn't fit in, didn't feel part of the group. He never married. He enlisted in military but was mustered out without commendation. He grew more isolated and, Subsequently increasingly paranoid. Eventually, shortly after his father's death, he just could not take it anymore. His lonely, paranoid heart led him to take to guns and a pipe bomb into a youth rally at Wedgwood Baptist Church and open fire. When he was finished, seven were seriously wounded, seven others were dead... and then Larry Gene Ashbrook took his own life. How crucial it is that we learn to accept one another. Pray that we would accept one another.

Therefore receive one another, Just as Christ also received us, To the glory of God.

Rom. 15:7

PRAYING FOR ONE ANOTHER

1. Pray that God will reveal to you the people on the periphery of activities in your church who need someone to reach out in an act of acceptance.



2. Thank God, who knows every shameful deed and every evil thought in your heart, yet still receives you as "accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. 1:6).

3. Pray that God would engender a spirit of openness, transparency, and acceptance in your church. 4. Pray that God would forgive all the times and ways we have excluded others from fellowship in the body of Christ.

Admonishment in the body of Christ must be both confrontive And caring, depending on the Nature of the problem.