

Cell notes, week beginning 31 October 2016

Accept one another

Romans 14:1 to 15:7

LAUNCH

How would you describe a church living in unity? What are the benefits of a church being united?

DISCOVERY & UNDERSTANDING

Let's start at the wrong end! **Read Romans 15:7**. This verse tells us we have to accept one another. Why does it say we should accept one another?

In the Gospel accounts Jesus accepted some pretty unsavoury characters! Were we any the less unsavoury when Jesus accepted us? How does that suggest we treat others whom we may regard as unacceptable (for whatever reason)?

There are all sorts of good reasons to accept one another. But what does this verse say is the *main* reason for accepting one another? The two previous verses (vv5,6) have more to say on that. Consider for a moment the effects of the fulfilment of these verses: what is our part in achieving such praise and glorification of our great God? What does this say about the significance of unity?

Read Chapter 14. Paul was writing this letter to the Romans at a time when the Gospel was being preached not just to Jewish people but to Gentiles too. Remember, those Jewish people in particular were living under oppression from Roman occupation. The Jewish people would have observed all sorts of Old Testament rules and regulations (Romans 14:1-7), not just from a belief in obeying God's law but also because these things would be engrained in their culture down many generations. There would be times under the Romans when they would be persecuted for observing their faith.

How might a new generation of Gentile believers regard these Jewish customs when they have received a fresh gospel of freedom? In turn, how would the Jewish people accepting the same gospel react to the way the Gentiles were practising their new-found faith? Which is right and which is wrong? (Remember the two leading lights of the emerging church, Peter and Paul, fell out with each other over the issue of circumcision: Galatians 2:11-14.) What does Paul say about us coming to a judgement over people who think differently from us (Romans 14:9-16)?

What does Romans 14:17-18 say about the importance of some of things the we consider important enough to justify not accepting someone? And what does vv19-22 say we should do about it? How might we put 'stumbling blocks' in the way of other people?

APPLICATION

Read Romans 15:1-6

- What might be the 'failings of the weak'? How should we help those who are 'weak'?
- Is there a danger that we might mistake 'cultural failings' (ways people act that offend us as good, upright, polite citizens) for 'spiritual failings'? How should we deal with that?
- Is there a difference in what we might accept of non-Christians, new Christians and mature Christians? How can we help people come to Christian maturity while fully accepting them?
- Unity only comes about when we accept one another. Pray for the Spirit of Unity (v5).