



## ▶ DAILY DEVOTIONAL.

**Saturday/Sunday, 9/29-30/18**

**THE HEART SET FREE**

**“No Discrimination”**

**Romans 15:1-13, New International Version (NIV)**

*We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up. For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: “The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.” For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.*

*May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God’s truth, so that the promises made to the patriarchs might be confirmed and, moreover, that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written:*

*“Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles;  
I will sing the praises of your name.”*

*Again, it says,  
“Rejoice, you Gentiles, with his people.”*

*And again,  
“Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles;  
let all the peoples extol him.”*

*And again, Isaiah says,  
“The Root of Jesse will spring up,  
one who will arise to rule over the nations;  
in him the Gentiles will hope.”*

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

**Family Activity:** Read Romans 15:1 — *Those of us who are strong and able in the faith need to step in and lend a hand to those who falter, and not just do what is most convenient for us. Strength is for service, not status.*

Discuss how each member of your family is strong, and how you are a strong family. Lead the discussion toward talking about how you can serve (help) someone individually and collectively. Strength is for service.

**Monday, 10/1/18**

**“Strength Is for Service”**

**Romans 15:1, The Message (MSG)**

*Those of us who are strong and able in the faith need to step in and lend a hand to those who falter, and not just do what is most convenient for us. Strength is for service, not status.*

This is the last week of the sermon series “A Heart Set Free.” The main character has been Paul. Paul was an antagonist of Christians. He was a religious Jewish leader who based his allegiance to God on religious laws. All that changed when he met Jesus. He didn’t meet Jesus as a physical human being, he met Jesus through a religious experience. The experience changed Paul’s life. He realized that true obedience to God was not through the law, but through faith – a faith that drove him to love with all his heart, soul, mind and strength.

The letter to the church in Rome is written to churches, not individuals. Paul is challenging the church to use her strength to be of service, meeting needs, lending a hand out of a love for the mission of the church. Paul provides a warning that the church is not about what is most convenient for the church. He reminds us “strength is for service.” What a great mantra!

- In what ways do you experience PWUMC as strong? Do these strengths show themselves in service?
- In what ways do you see yourself as a strong Christian? How do you live out these strengths in service?

**Prayer:** (from “Just a Closer Walk with Thee”)

Dear God, thank you for all the times I felt your presence, when your strength has given me strength. I have learned that even when I feel weak, I am strong when I trust in you.

I pray your strength will move me to be strong in service for you, to share your love, to care for your people. Bring me closer to you so your love flows through me.

I am weak but Thou art strong;  
Jesus, keep me from all wrong;  
I'll be satisfied as long  
As I walk, let me walk close to Thee.

Just a closer walk with Thee,  
Grant it, Jesus, is my plea,  
Daily walking close to Thee,  
Let it be, dear Lord, let it be.

**Tuesday, 10/2/18**

**“How Can I Help?”**

**Romans 15:2-3 (MSG)**

*Each one of us needs to look after the good of the people around us, asking ourselves, “How can I help?” For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: “The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.”*

On September 23, Pastor Steve concluded the sermon with an invitation as to how the PWUMC pastors pray with people. We don't ask, “Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?” The question is: “May I pray for you?”

The Episcopal church I attended in Milwaukee has a very small beautiful chapel next to the sanctuary. After worship, a priest was available to pray. He would ask, “May I pray for you?” I found the experience very meaningful.

In a similar way, Paul instructs “Each of us must please our neighbor for the good purpose of building up the neighbor.” (NIV) We read that building up our neighbors is for the good purpose, which Jesus models. As faithful Christians, we learn to look beyond ourselves. We seek to live out (be) the kingdom of God here on earth when we ask, “How can I help?” This reminds me of the neighbor who, instead of complaining about the tall grass of another neighbor, mowed the 1+ acre when he found out the homeowner had recently gone into a nursing home.

- How can we adjust our vision, so we see a need, rather than an eyesore?
- How many situations can you think of where you can ask, “How can I help?” Follow through on one of them, and reflect on how it made you feel.

**Prayer:** Dear God, you have been my help in ages past. You come to me asking, “How can I help?” Help me to be honest with you, to ask for help as a means of letting go so my heart is free to worship and serve. Then, open my eyes to see the needs of others, and out of my love for you, to ask “How can I help?” In the name of Jesus, Amen.

**Wednesday, 10/3/18**

**“Hope”**

**Romans 15:4 (MSG)**

*For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.*

Many of you know my favorite word is *hope*. It does not carry an attitude of optimism, but a spirit of the possibilities and opportunities God provides for the future. Paul writes it best in the letter to the Hebrews: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1, KJV) Hope is based on faith.

When we read this verse, we are mindful that Paul comes from the Jewish faith. “Paul reads the Jewish Scriptures in the light of the Christ event, and finds them filled with Christian meaning.” (The People's New Testament Commentary, pg. 503) This raises a contemporary question for us. What does it mean to be a part of the world, and see Christ in it? I think we are too often ready to respond with platitudes: It will all work out. We suffer to have joy. Everything works together for good. Other responses include: ignoring the reality of the troubles of our world, living as though pain and suffering don't really matter – there's a better time/place coming.

- What if we look around and ask: How can I help?
- What if we look around and ask: How can I serve?
- What are ways you can be an instrument of hope?

**Prayer:** Romans 15:4 refers to Psalm 69. Let us pray (try praying aloud):

*Lord, the LORD Almighty, may those who hope in you not be disgraced because of me; God of Israel, may those who seek you not be put to shame because of me.  
For I endure scorn for your sake, and shame covers my face.  
I am a foreigner to my own family, a stranger to my own mother's children;  
for zeal for your house consumes me, and the insults of those who insult you fall on me.*

Psalm 69:30-35 ends with:

*Rescue me, God,  
lift me up.*

*Then I shall give thanks and praise God's name,  
For song pleases God more than cattle  
Or bulls with horns and hooves*

*Look and see, you oppressed,  
there is cause to rejoice  
for those who seek God.  
Let your hearts hope again,  
for the Lord hears the poor,  
does not despise the imprisoned.  
Praise God, heaven and earth,  
The seas and all that live in them. (The Psalter, 1985)*

Amen.

**Thursday, 10/4/18**

**“So That”**

**Romans 15:5-6 (MSG)**

*May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Paul moves toward closing his letter to the churches in Rome. The letter began by citing some of the areas of separation the churches were experiencing. Some folks came from a Jewish background, others were Gentiles. It was natural that there were differences in cultural practices, especially around food, drink and festivals. Paul's intent, though, is for all to come together unified in Christ Jesus. He invites all to come together through the power of God to share in the “same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had ... ” This is for the purpose of glorifying God.

So that. Those two little words give us the reason Paul thinks all believers should come together, so that we are pleasing to God. We do this by inviting Christ to be the dweller of our souls. We live out faith and trust in Jesus in unity by living and loving as compassionate, caring people who always look to Jesus so that we please God. We live out our faith by looking beyond ourselves toward the greater good of God's loving purposes for the world.

- Do you believe forgiveness and compromise are necessary to live according to these verses?
- How do you experience God's endurance and encouragement? Does it go beyond your personal wants/needs/desires?

**Prayer:** Dear God, you are steadfast and encouraging, not for my benefit, but for all people. Help me to understand that you love and care for me personally as much as you love and care for my neighbors. In Jesus' name. Amen.

**Friday, 10/5/18**

**“Just As”**

**Romans 15:7**

*Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.*

This week Pastor Steve's sermon focused on “No Discrimination.” Discriminate is defined as to: recognize a distinction; differentiate. The word and action is neutral. My taste buds can differentiate between spicy and mild foods. This is good because I cannot tolerate spicy foods very well. I make the distinction between my grandchildren, which is good because the 1-year-old is not going to eat pizza like his 4-year-old sister does. To make a distinction or to differentiate is neutral.

Discrimination becomes a problem, a stumbling block (as Paul says), when discrimination is an act of injustice against someone or a group of people. It is apparent in this verse that Paul is telling us that Christ accepts all as we are *in order* to bring praise to God. Think of it this way: Paul is telling us that Christ accepts all as we are *so that* God may be glorified. This means Christ accepts us as we are and changes us into who God wants us to be – forgiven, loved and encouraged so that we are helpers and servants of God's people.

- Do you experience any stumbling blocks in your life? What do you need to do in order to turn your heart to Christ?
- How do you discriminate in a positive way? In a negative way? What needs to change in your life in order to accept all people as God's people?

**Prayer:** Dear God, I am humbled that you love me and care for me. I am humbled that you call me your child. I am humbled that you see me worthy to be your servant. Help me to love you faithfully in return so that your kingdom of love, compassion and justice grows here on earth. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him,  
so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

***This week's devotions were written by  
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