

## Sermon Notes on “God’s Anti-Narcissism Plan” Romans 15:1-6

- As Paul brings his message on unity and practicing your liberty in Christ to a close, he turns his sights on one of the biggest obstacles we face: narcissism (the practice of self-centeredness with an exaggerated sense of self-importance).
  - Jesus died so we wouldn’t live for ourselves , but for Him (2 Cor. 5:15)
  - We come to Christ by “denying ourselves” (Luke 9:23) and live for Him and with others by putting on “humility” (Col. 3:12)
- The implications of being exonerated in Christ is that we are “united”:
  - With Christ (Rom. 6:5)
  - With other justified believers who worship, grow, serve and love together (Phil. 2:2)
- But practical unit is difficult when the “*weak in faith*” (14:1-2, 15:1) and “*strong*” (15:1) hold different convictions about non-essential matters that God hasn’t commanded or forbidden. They will tend to “*judge*” the others (like the “*weak*”) or regard them with “*contempt*” (like the “*strong*”)

Paul shares **four applications** we can make in order to practice God’s anti-narcissism plan:

### 1. **Focus on the good of others first** (15:1-2)

- Christianity is not an individualistic faith and all about your own personal growth and self-satisfaction, but it’s a relational faith that is community-driven and for the glory of God (v. 5-6, 9).
1. The other’s focus is an “**ought to**” (v. 1): We have an obligation to “*bear the weaknesses of those without strength*”
  2. The other’s focus is a “**do not**” (v. 1 – “*not please ourselves*”): It’s not all about our particular non-essential faith conviction, but we also make room for other believer’s conviction in the realm of uncommanded or unforbidden non-essentials.
  3. The other’s focus is a “**for his good**” mindset and ministry (v. 2): Paul’s use of the word “*neighbor*” alludes to the command to “*love your neighbor as yourself*” (Lev. 19:18; Rom 13:8-10). It’s not about being a people pleaser (Gal. 1:10), but about being God-loving people-pleaser that looks to spiritually build up (“edification”) their faith (14:19; 1 Cor. 10:23-24)

## 2. Follow the example of Christ (15:3)

- This is our greatest example and Paul quotes Psalm 69:9b to show us how our Lord's suffering and work on the cross wasn't about pleasing Himself (1 Cor. 10:33-11:1)
- If Christ limited the expression of His liberty (He sacrificially died for us, yet wasn't guilty), then we can surely find a way to forego the full expression of our liberty "for the good" of other believers.

## 3. Feed your soul with hope-producing Scripture (15:4)

- "instruction" informs "perseverance" and "encouragement" and this delivers "hope".
- All this comes from the "Scriptures" which are the inspired, infallible, authoritative and sufficient "writings" of God, a collection of 66 books written by 40 fallible authors from every walk of life over a period of 1540 years in different places and circumstances on 3 continents (Asia, Africa, Europe) in 3 languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek) with one unfolding message of hope about God's miraculous redemption of sinners through JC. Ps. 119:160 says it all: "*The sum of Your word is truth...*"
- **Without the Scriptures**, not one person would ever know the most essential truths of life: WHO we are ("created in the image of God"), WHY we are here (to live for the glory of God), WHAT our problem is (sin against God), HOW our problem can be fixed (faith in the finished work of Christ apart from any good works), WHERE we are going (heaven to worship, serve and be with Jesus forever) and WHO is orchestrating everything (The only true living and eternal God).

## 4. Fight for God-honoring unity (15:5-6)

- It's an **empowered unity** (v. 5: "Now may the God who **gives** perseverance and encouragement"): The very gifts we need to experience "hope" are the very gifts God gives us (perseverance and encouragement).

- It's a **centralized-minded unity** (v. 5: "*grant you to be of the **same mind** with one another **according** to Christ Jesus*"): What brings us together is our joint focus on the Lord Jesus Christ who established our unity.
- It's a **purpose-driven unity** (v. 6): Our unity is motivated by our purpose to "***glorify** the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*"