

## Prayer for Unity & Hope

### Introduction:

One of the great privileges of being a Christian, being in relationship with God, is that we can spend time in prayer, privately and together when the church meets.

The Apostle Paul was a great pray-er & one who exhorted others to pray. We have many examples of his prayers scattered throughout his 13 New Testament letters.

In Romans 15 we find two prayers which are vital to the wellbeing of any local Church and all Christians: unity and hope.

### UNITY (Verses 5-6)

These verses maybe the core message of *Romans*.

If you were to re-read Romans Chapter 14, you'd discover that the issue dividing the Christians in Rome had to do with food sacrificed to idols and observing special days and the differences between Christians from Jewish and Gentile backgrounds.

While these issues won't be of concern to us here to-day, there are other issues which may cause division within any Christian community. You'll know what particular issues might cause division here.

It's clear that there's no way the unity and fellowship of a congregation can be built without a self-sacrificing spirit amongst its members. If everyone is out for their own ideas then the fellowship will self-destruct. But, as people work with and for one another, the church will flourish, all will benefit and God will receive the glory.

## Prayer for Unity & Hope

This prayer concerns unity amongst Christians, those who *follow Christ*. As we take God's Word seriously so we'll refuse to compromise on things that are clear from the plain reading of Scripture. It's not possible to have this sort of unity with non-Christians or people who claim to be Christians who continue to be divisive.

Paul's exhortation in verse 7 to *accept one another* is vital. Note the sort of acceptance he envisages: *as Christ accepted you*.

The perfect Church is in Heaven. This will never be a perfect Church nor is there a perfect Minister. But if we pray for one another, forgive and accept one another and pray for unity amongst ourselves, then God will bless our endeavours.

### HOPE (Verse 13)

When we use the word 'hope' it usually sounds weak & flabby. For example, we might say: *I hope it rains or I hope bananas are cheap this week*.

The 'hope' of which we read in the Bible is a patient, disciplined and confident waiting for and expectation of the return of our Lord & the Eternal Life which God gives to those who repent & believe the Gospel. This is only possible because of the 'living hope of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead'. That's how Peter puts it in 1 Peter 1:3. It's a joyful waiting which gives courage, boldness and strength in the face of life's challenges, sufferings and disappointments.

## Prayer for Unity & Hope

Our prayer for 'hope' is divided into two parts:

### ***The God of hope***

We need to be sure of the God to whom we pray, not being a god of our own imagining but the God and Father of our Lord Jesus who has revealed Himself in Scripture.

God generates 'hope' in those who trust in Jesus as their Saviour. God is active in the lives of those who belong to Him.

God is the object of our hope. Non-Christians will place their hope in things like success, wealth, status, popularity, advancement in career while Christians need to be focused on God. God is the source of hope. Other things can't give lasting hope. In fact without Christ we are hopeless!

Hope brings peace & joy as we read in verse 13, which God alone can give.

### ***The gift of hope***

Joy and peace seem to lead to a greater degree of hope. The word *overflow* might remind us of "Clancy of the overflow". It implies an abundance of 'hope', a "Clancy of hope", an overwhelming confidence in God to fulfil His promises relating to forgiveness and Eternal Life in His presence.

This overflowing hope comes *by the power of the Holy Spirit*. When we become Christians, God gifts us the Holy Spirit who comes to indwell us as individuals and is in our midst as a local Church. The tri-une God makes a 'present' of abundant hope.

## **Prayer for Unity & Hope**

### Conclusion:

Here are two prayers which we can pray for others and for ourselves.

Especially might we pray for unity and hope for this local church!

If we were to be serious about praying for unity and hope here, it would result in significant change, healing, obedience and growth - and God would receive the glory! Surely, that's what we all desire.

Why not print these two prayers out and use them as a book mark in our Bibles and have them prominently located on our fridge and near the computer. Then we'll be reminded daily to pray for unity and hope.