

- ***Read Romans 1:8-17*** There are many different events, ideas, and such that are unifying in their nature. I would say that the Olympics Games are one such event. For 3 weeks every four years, nations unite in their showing of pride in their countries as their best athletes compete for Olympic glory. I would lump the World Cup in there right with it as doing the same thing. Patriotism can strongly unite people. Think of America for just a moment. What is this country often referred to in regard to its people? Often we are called the melting pot of the world because our nation is made up of so many different types of people from all corners of the world. Maya Angelou wrote a poem entitled "Human Family" some 26 years ago that takes this idea of unity a step farther by stating that just being a human unites us in the most powerful way. *****I note the obvious differences in the human family. Some of us are serious, some thrive on comedy. Some declare their lives are lived as true profundity, and others claim they really live the real reality. The variety of our skin tones can confuse, bemuse, delight, brown and pink and beige and purple, tan and blue and white. I've sailed upon the seven seas and stopped in every land, I've seen the wonders of the world not yet one common man. I know ten thousand women called Jane and Mary Jane, but I've not seen any two who really were the same. Mirror twins are different although their features jibe, and lovers think quite different thoughts while lying side by side. We love and lose in China, we weep on England's moors, and laugh and moan in Guinea, and thrive on Spanish shores. We seek success in Finland, are born and die in Maine. In minor ways we differ, in major we're the same. I note the obvious differences between each sort and type, but we are more alike, my friends, than we are unlike. We are more alike, my friends, than we are unlike. We are more alike, my friends, than we are unlike.*****
- Certainly, we must recognize that no matter our color, background, or other differences we do share many great and wonderful characteristics by just being human, and those unite us into this big melting pot that is the human race. However, might I suggest to you that there is a melting pot that stretches and encompasses far more people of different characteristics than anything else? Did you happen to catch that melting pot factor in Paul's words in **Romans 1:8-17**?
- We read in this text about the Gospel factor in uniting individuals of all types. Paul, in this text, mentions many different types of people that are united under the flag of the Gospel and Jesus Christ. It ought to make complete sense to us that he would write such a letter considering the fact that the church in Rome was made up of Christians from Jewish and Gentile background. He was writing this letter in hopes of uniting them under a common banner...that banner being Jesus Christ and the many facets of their faith that united them in Christ. This morning, I would like for us to consider Melting Pot Christianity and the many differences that the Gospel overcomes when it brings people together by the blood of Jesus Christ.

I. The Gospel overcomes racial differences.

- A. One of the first examples of the Gospel's power over racial differences is that of Phillip and the Ethiopian Eunuch. As an Ethiopian, this man was more than likely of a much darker skin tone than even middle easterner Phillip. Yet, the Gospel brought them together and united them in Jesus Christ. (**Acts 8:26-40**)
- B. Also, the events of **Acts 6:1-6**. Some of the brethren were greatly disturbed by the fact that the Hellenistic (Gentile) Jews were being neglected in the daily distribution of the church. This was a racial issue! Yet, this was a mistake on the part of man, not of God. The Apostles knew that the Gospel and Jesus would crossover and conquer racial differences, thus they put men over the completion of this task.
- C. No matter our color, we must remember that the Gospel truly is for all. Regardless of if we are red, or yellow...black or white...we are all precious in Jesus's sight and He wants us all to be saved in Him.

II. The Gospel overcomes cultural differences.

- A. Much of what we read in the New Testament Letters was written to help these new Christians of different backgrounds learn how to get along in Christ. Nowhere is this more true than in Rome where Paul instructs these disciples in **Romans 14** to respect one another's cultural background.
- B. Some of these people had a conscience and faith against eating meats and observing holy days. Paul says that this is just fine. They were ok to live by that faith, and others ought to respect it. The same was also true for those on the other side of the conscience coin. The goal was for **Romans 14:19** to be accomplished.

- C. Yet, how was it that these people were able to get along? How is it that we are able to be united and work together with people who have such difference backgrounds than we do? How is it that we can go across the country or half way around the world and still worship with saints despite our cultural differences? We can do all of these things because we have all been washed in the precious blood of Jesus Christ. **(Gal. 3:27,28)**

III. The Gospel overcomes intelligence differences.

- A. Within the New Testament writings, we quickly realize that one's level of intelligence didn't hinder the accepting and obeying of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul even makes note that he was sent to speak to the wise and the foolish. **(Rom. 1:14)**
- B. Remember what is said about Peter and John in **Acts 4:13** after they proclaim with boldness the truth of Jesus and His resurrection? The Jewish leadership marveled because these uneducated and untrained men spoke with such confidence. Yet, what about the Apostle Paul? This man was highly educated and was often the smartest guy in the room, **(Phil. 3)** but that didn't stop him from being unified with Peter and John. They were all Apostles of Jesus and great servants to the Kingdom.
- C. Regardless of our level of intelligence, the Gospel is for us all. The only thing we ought to think about when it comes to foolishness or wisdom is the fact that the Gospel is often perceived as being foolishness to those who claim wisdom. True wisdom lies in the one who accepts Jesus as Lord.

IV. The Gospel overcomes gender differences.

- A. For so long, man has sought for there to be a great separation of the sexes in regards to equality and value, but the Gospel clearly teachings that in Christ we all share the same value. **(Gal. 3:28)**
- B. Under the grace of the Gospel, men and women both ought to have the goals and focus of spreading the Kingdom and reaching heaven themselves. The couple that gives us such a great example of working together for the Kingdom is that of Aquila and Priscilla in **Acts 18**. This couple worked tougher as disciples to live godly lives and teach others about Jesus. We have a great example of them doing so with Apollos. **(Acts 18:24-26)**
- C. Both men and women hold great value in the eyes of God. They are valued because Jesus died for one gender's sins just as much as He did the other.

V. The Gospel overcomes geographical differences.

- A. While many miles might separate folks in this world, no amount of miles is enough for their to be a split in regards to the Gospel. Jesus said to go into all the world to preach the Gospel because the good news isn't confined by geography. **(Matt. 28:18-20)**
- B. Paul especially recognized the Gospel's power of geography because he desired greatly to go to all parts of his world to preach the Gospel. We saw where he opened his letter by stating his desire to go and share the Gospel with those in Rome, but he had his sights set on even further destinations. **(Rom. 15:22-29)**
- C. No matter whether we are here in the US or in the Philippines or in Africa or wherever...the Gospel overcomes those many miles and unites us under the banner of Christ Jesus.

VI. The Gospel overcomes generational differences.

- A. Some might think that differences in age and generations pose a major roadblock for Christians, but this doesn't seem to be the case in Scripture.
- B. Paul and Timothy were of different generations, yet they thrived together in learning and growing together as teachers and evangelists. Paul even goes on to write to Titus, another younger preacher, that the older generations ought to put in effort to show the younger generations how they ought to live their lives as disciples. **(Titus 2:1-8)**
- C. Regardless of age or generation, the Gospel has the power to overcome and unite all people as they all strive to be more like Jesus in all that they do.

VII. The Gospel overcomes socioeconomic differences.

- A. Also mentioned in **Galatians 3:27,28** is how there is no longer slave nor free man in Christ Jesus. All are one and the same. This means no matter where you might fall on the scale of society, we all, again, have great value in the eyes of God. The disciple who is a slave holds the same value as the disciple who is a free man. Paul doesn't tell Onesimus that he had continue to runaway from **Philemon** once he becomes a Christian. Instead, he tells him to fulfill his duties as a slave and to do it with all his might. Philemon was also to accept him back as a fellow disciple who held high value.

- B. We also ought to have great value in each other's eyes. The earliest Christians were willing to share their means in order for those poorer saints to have what they need. We see this early on in **Acts 2**. We then see it again in the **Corinthian letters** written by Paul. Needy Christians were aided by those brethren who saw a need and fulfilled it.
- C. We were all spiritually poor, yet Jesus made us rich in Him. We must remember the truth that we are all united in Christ Jesus and made extremely rich in His graces.

There are so many things in this world that seek to separate us from one another. Yet, as we close this lesson, I want for us to take away this **One Big Thing: We are all equal and valuable in the eyes of God because of Jesus and His saving Gospel. But let's also remember that equality doesn't mean sameness.** We are of different races. We are of different cultural backgrounds, intelligence levels, genders, geographical backgrounds, generations, and socioeconomic levels. This is just a fact. We don't have to be the same in these areas to be valuable or equal. We can be ourselves. We don't have to be cookie cutter Christians in those things that make us unique as individuals. But we all most conform to the Character of Jesus. We all must die to self and live to Christ. In this way we are all equal and one together. May God help us to accept our value and treat our brethren with that value through patience and love. They don't have to live exactly as I do, but we both must seek to serve Jesus well. May we all live for Jesus and glorify Him and serve His Kingdom in every way we can. May we honor His sacrifice that takes all peoples and brings them together as one at the cross.