

2022 NORTH AMERICAN MISSIONS EMPHASIS

Sermon Outline

United: Together on Mission

Scripture: Romans 15:5-6

Now may the God who gives endurance and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, according to Christ Jesus, so that you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ with one mind and one voice.

Note: Before the sermon, show one of the Week of Prayer missionary video segments or the theme video “United” available at AnnieArmstrong.com/resources.

Introduction

Our country—our world—is divided these days. All you need to do is look at social media, and you’ll immediately see that there are a wide variety of opinions and beliefs on things that really matter and things that don’t matter at all.

Even the churches in our denomination — the Southern Baptist Convention — don’t always agree. But there are great things happening all around the world through the work of Southern Baptists, and the video we just saw is a great example of that. Today we want to focus on the ways God is at work through us in our support of missionaries serving through the North American Mission Board (NAMB).

One primary way NAMB works with churches in evangelism efforts is to help churches plant new churches. Through NAMB’s church planting arm, Send Network, we are seeing more churches planted and more people becoming part of the family of faith and the community of a local church. Through Send Relief, the compassion ministry arm of both NAMB and the International Mission Board, we are seeing needs met and lives changed all over the world. There is a unity of mission — one we can all get behind, and we are supportive of the work. This season in our church, we’re taking up the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, 100 percent of which goes to support church planters and other missionaries serving throughout the United States and Canada.

God has positioned our Southern Baptist family of churches to be a force for His mission. He’s blessed us with resources and one of the largest missions forces the world has ever known. Because of our diverse passions, giftings, and makeup — but with a singular focus — we can see God accomplish more than we could ask or imagine through us. Simply put — we’ve been built for this. The Church has been built for this.

Context

In Matthew 16:18, Jesus made a promise to Peter that He would build His Church. His stated vision is that His church would be a strong, victorious, offensive force storming the gates of hell. But how? Well, years later, in his first apostolic letter, Peter tells us in 1 Peter 2:4-5:

As you come to him, a living stone—rejected by people but chosen and honored by God—you yourselves, as living stones, a spiritual house, are being built to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (CSB)

Jesus told Peter, the little stone, that He, the cornerstone, would build His church from living stones. Jesus is building His church by taking us, His disciples, and continually building us together into a new house: a spiritual house, a holy house, a house with outward purpose. Upon the foundation of His character and finished work, He's building us to be a better priesthood that offers better sacrifices, a people who belong wholly to Him. He's building us to be a new kind of people with a new, focused mission: proclaiming His goodness, grace and mercy to the those who are not His so they might become His.

The mission field is huge, and the opportunity is ripe. And as Southern Baptists, we are joining Jesus in His work of building His Church. We pray to see every Christian pursue their unreached family members, friends, coworkers and neighbors to share the hope of the gospel through evangelism. We desire to see needs met and lives changed through compassion ministry. And we want to see churches planted everywhere for everyone with Christ as the Cornerstone: churches that live, love and serve like Christ—churches that bring glory to Christ.

But more important than what we want is what God wants. Which is why our focal verse, Romans 15:5-6, is such a timely call for us this year to unite as we enter the season of giving to our North American missions work.

Rome was a city of greatest influence and potential. What happened in Rome was literally transported around the world. Rome was upstream and everything flowed downstream. If the gospel got a hold of Rome, the gospel would transform the world. Even though Paul hadn't planted the church—nor had he even visited the city—he felt the urgency to write his letter to the church in Rome. In it, he begins with his declaration in chapter 1, verse 16: that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation for all who believe. Then for 11 chapters, Paul walks through probably the most thorough explanation of what God has done for sinners in Christ Jesus in all the Scriptures. In chapter 12, he begins calling his listeners to action, laying out how the gospel should transform our relationship with God, our relationships with one another and our relationship with the outside world.

And before he closes this letter, Paul, the master vision caster, inserts what could almost be described as a parenthetical prayer. He says:

Now may the God who gives endurance and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, according to Christ Jesus, so that you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ with one mind and one voice. (Romans 15:5-6, CSB)

In order to understand what Paul is saying, or better yet, praying, I believe it's best to look at the text backward. In doing so, Paul lays out three foundational truths.

Three Foundational Truths:

1. God desires to get glory through us! (verse 6)
 - Think Matthew 5 and the city on a hill.
2. God has designed it so that we can glorify Him together (verse 6 – “with one voice”)
 - Again, the picture of living stones being built together.
3. Giving God glory together requires harmony (verse 5)

What is harmony?

The word that Paul uses for harmony literally means, “like-minded,” “of the same mind,” or “single-minded.” But Paul gives us a qualifier. Paul isn’t asking God to just give us ANY like-mindedness. He says this single-mindedness is “according to Christ Jesus.” Paul is praying that God would give His church a unified, single-mindedness and that it would be the mind of Christ.

Well, what do we know about the mind of Christ? When I think about the mind of Christ, I can’t help but think about His last recorded words in the Gospels and in Acts. In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus told His disciples that because of and under His authority, they were to go make disciples of all nations. He told them to baptize people into a new identity and teach them to obey Him in every area of life. And in Acts 1:8, Jesus told His disciples to wait until the promised Holy Spirit came and filled them, because they were going to be His witnesses to the end of the earth.

Based on these verses and all that we read in the New Testament, what is the mind of Christ? It’s the Great Commission: men and women, boys and girls hearing, believing and obeying the gospel. It is disciples being made and those disciples making more disciples until the knowledge of the glory of the Lord covers the earth like the waters cover the sea. All of our missionaries in North America are united in their focus on the Great Commission. Being a missionary is living a life of sacrifice and experiencing the challenges of culture and division. Just like us, they can become distracted to stray off course and we need to pray for them and encourage them to stay the course.

So, how do we get this sort of harmony that comes with having the mind of Christ and the focus on the Great Commission? What does it require?

1. Harmony requires endurance

The word Paul uses here means “patient continuance.” It is the characteristic of someone not deterred from their intentional purpose even in the face of the worst trials and most difficult suffering. Having a single-mindedness for the Great Commission is hard for us because we are pulled in so many different directions. How do we keep the main thing the main thing when the needs of others, the expectations of our community and our own hearts clamor for other things?

2. Harmony requires encouragement

The word *encouragement* is best understood by breaking down the English word into two parts: en-courage. It means to fill with courage. Endurance, or as Eugene Peterson has said, “Long obedience in the same direction,” requires courage.

And here’s the good news! God will provide both of these! Paul doesn’t tell us we have to muster them up from within ourselves. No, God is the God of endurance. He’s the God of encouragement. In fact, the word Paul uses for encouragement is built from the root word “parakaleo.” It literally means “to call near.” How does the God of encouragement fill us with courage and endurance? He draws us near to Himself! He promises to be with us!

Again, who does that sound like? That sounds like Christ who said at the end of the Great Commission: “I am with you always, to the end of the age.” God has promised us Himself. He’s promised that He is the God of endurance. He’s the God of encouragement. And He wants for us to glorify Him with one voice. So how do we tap into this? Where do we start?

3. Harmony requires prayer

Again, looking at the text backward, Paul begins by saying, “May God.” He’s praying this for them. And in doing so, he’s showing them how to see this accomplished through them. When Jesus told His disciples about the great harvest that awaited them in Matthew 9 and Luke 10, He didn’t say, “The harvest is plentiful and the laborers are few, so go.” He said, “The harvest is plentiful and the laborers are few, so pray.”

What do you think would happen if a church began to pray for God to give them a single-minded, lasting, courage-filled devotion for the Great Commission? I don’t have to guess. I’m convinced these are the prayers that God longs to answer. These are the prayers that are at the very heart of God. How do I know? Because we have it right here in Romans 15, given to us by God.

Questions to consider for closing:

1. What have been the greatest (your personal and our corporate) distractions from the Great Commission?
2. What do we (you personally and us corporately) need more of today for a unified focus on the Great Commission? Endurance or encouragement?
3. What is God telling you to do and when are you going to do it?

Ending

End with an intentional, crafted time of prayer, whether it is in the response time or as a part of corporate worship

- Ask God for a unified, single-minded focus on the Great Commission
- Ask God for endurance and encouragement
- Ask God to get glory in three directions: from individuals, from your local church, from the SBC family of churches
- Thank God for our missionaries who serve throughout North America – for the well-being of their families and the effectiveness of their churches and ministries.

Sermon outline by Noah Oldham, Senior Director of Church Planting Deployment, North American Mission Board and pastor of August Gate Church in Belleville, Illinois.