

Receptive Grace -- Part 2
Holy Cross Lutheran Church
Adult Bible Class
September 19, 2021

So far in our discussion of receptive grace we have focussed on the discussions Paul has with the congregations in Corinth and Rome. However, it is important to note that there are several other places in the New Testament where receptive grace put into practice:

- Even though Jesus declared all foods clean (Mark 7:19), the Jerusalem Council recommends Gentiles abstain from meat with blood in it out of kindness to their conservative Jewish brothers and sisters (Acts 15:28-29) and the apostle Paul recommends restricting our Christian liberties if it causes division in the Body of Christ (Romans 14:1-15:7).
- Although circumcision is no longer required and Paul argues strongly against it in the book of Galatians, he still would circumcise Timothy to help advance the gospel (Acts 16:1-3).
- Even though the need for animal sacrifice is no longer necessary (Hebrews 10:1-18), Paul would participate in the temple sacrificial system on at least one occasion to dispel the misunderstanding that he had become anti-Jewish (Acts 21:22-26).
- Although we are not to judge others based on clothing and other externals (John 7:24), Paul counselled men and women to follow cultural guidelines for showing respect (1 Corinthians 11).
- And even though paying taxes to Rome was funding the people who would oppress and persecute Christians, Jesus encouraged paying taxes as a practical expression of submission (Matthew 22:15-22) and the early church followed this practice as an act of honour (Romans 13:6-7).

Simply put, receptive grace puts the needs and concerns of others above our own needs and gives up the "need to be right" to follow Christ's example of love and compassion. Receptive grace is a characteristic of the new heart that comes through faith and that is an enactment of the gifts of the Spirit (Galatians 5:13-26) and an embodiment of love (1 Corinthians 13).

The unrenewed (sinful) heart often seeks its value in what it knows, among other things. Knowledge is power, so to speak. But as Paul reminds us, knowledge alone, without love, makes us nothing. (1 Corinthians 13:2).

Instead, we, "Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgement on disputable matters."
Romans 14:1

Practically speaking we:

- Come along side the other person
- We draw them to ourselves

- Bear their “weakness.”
 - This means to put yourself **intellectually** into their position. Understand it, sympathize with it, understand how they came to that opinion, see the strengths of their position, even though you disagree with it.
 - This also means to enter **personally** into their viewpoint we,
 - Make space for them. Take time for them.
 - Being open to modify your position
 - Expecting to be misunderstood
 - Honour the “pace of God” in their lives and not try to hurry it up.

When we put these things into practice, we begin to show the receptive grace we have received in Christ.