

**Romans Chapter 15**  
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## **Romans Chapter 15**

There are many questions that Christians have asked over the years as to how they should act and what things are acceptable or forbidden to those who hold Christ as Master and Lord. In what we call Chapter 15 of Paul's letter to his brothers and sisters in Rome, he completes his discussion of how we react to and address what we see as wrong and right for Christians trying to live in this world (as it is). Paul has spent a considerable amount of time discussing not necessarily what we see as how we should live, but how we react to differences in our level of faith versus the place a brother or sister may be.

**<sup>1</sup>Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves. <sup>2</sup>Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification.**

The opening two verses of Chapter 15 summarize Paul's thoughts on what is acceptable and what is not. We are to be considerate of the beliefs and actions of our brothers and sisters in Christ and edify them. Wouldn't it be nice if all Christians lived lives that considered and held up those who are weaker and edified his neighbor for their good. That is what Paul says we should do and how we should act in this world.

Paul indicates that when we consider the appropriateness of insisting on our own liberty of action and belief in certain areas (food, drink, clothing, etc.) versus giving in to the beliefs of others, we should strive to please our neighbor before we please ourselves (give consideration to their belief). That is what Love does and why Paul believed it was important for us to consider others first (before ourselves).

Love does not insist on self before others. The Phillips translation of verse 1 is interesting:

**We who have strong faith ought to shoulder the burden of the doubts and qualms of others, and not just to go our own sweet way. {Rom 15:1 J. B. Phillips}**

Verse 2 however indicates that we are to be considerate to the desires of others for their good, which indicates that we should not show consideration to desires that would hurt them (confirm them in their weakness).

Yielding to the convictions of others is often very difficult to do, and Paul indicates that we are to always leave our brothers and sisters in a condition to rethink or challenge their beliefs so that they can grow in strength (truth) or faith.

So, how do we handle the variations of belief that can bring on enough disagreement to split us apart? Paul writes that there are things that can be done to work these disagreements of belief out. He gives up three examples of encouragement to help us with these problems.

**<sup>3</sup>For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "THE REPROACHES OF THOSE WHO REPROACHED YOU FELL ON ME." <sup>4</sup>For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.**

Jesus never did anything wrong, yet he was considerate to the actions of others. Even though he was never in any position that was displeasing to the Father, Jesus constantly found he was at odds with those he encountered. His

reactions seemed to vary with circumstance. At times, he continued with his actions, knowing that what he did and how he reacted would place him in opposition to those he was dealing with.

In Luke Chapter 14 a situation arose where the Pharisees accused Jesus of not keeping the Sabbath properly? They were very upset because he did things they felt were wrong to do on the Sabbath. How did Jesus react to these accusations? Did he give in to their opinion? No, he did not. He ignored their protest and went ahead and did things that upset them even more, because if he had gone along with their desires, they would never have learned what God intended the Sabbath to be. So the Lord did not adjust to their antagonism.

At other times, he accommodated the desires of others. In Matthew Chapter 17, we learn that on another occasion Jesus was accused of not paying his taxes. When the disciples told him about this problem, he sent Peter down to the lake to catch a fish. In the mouth of the fish, Peter found a coin that was sufficient to pay the tax for both Peter and himself. Jesus said he did this in order not to offend them. That is, he adjusted to their complaint at that point.

Just as we find it difficult to respond to the problems of proper action, Jesus did also. There is a third example, where Jesus seemed to throw up his hands and admit there was no answer to the problems others had with his actions. In Matthew 11:16-19 He responded to the complaints of others concerning his eating habits:

**<sup>16</sup> “But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market places, who call out to the other *children*, <sup>17</sup> and say, ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.’ <sup>18</sup> For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon!’ <sup>19</sup> The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”**  
**(Matthew 11:16-19 NASV)**

In this instance, Jesus acknowledged that whatever he did would cause complaint from those who believed it was their privilege to find fault. As a Nazarene, John the Baptist observed certain food restrictions and others found fault. Jesus did not observe these restrictions and they found fault with him because he differed in observance from John. In this case, Jesus evidently simply recognized the impossibility, at times, of adjusting to everyone else's expectations. In recognizing this, he went ahead and did what God had sent him to do and he let God take care of the difficulties others had with his observation of his father's will for him.

So, what do we learn from this? There will be times when you can't please everyone. There are times when regardless of what you do, someone will have a problem with you faith and understanding. How do you react at those times. As much as possible:

**<sup>1</sup>Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves. <sup>2</sup>Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification.**

To say that how we react can be difficult is a given.

In verses, 1-4, Paul tells us we need to have love to be willing to give in when we can, and refusing to do so only when it is going to be hurtful to somebody, leaving them ignorant of the principles of Scripture, bound to some narrow, rigid point of view.

Paul goes on to show us there is encouragement in the present.

**<sup>5</sup>Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup>so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

There is no need to get too stressed out when we face these differences. God will work it out. We need to pray for and seek God's guidance and help in achieving unity among believers (**be of the same mind with one another**). If we do this (achieve unity) with one voice we will glorify God the Father. As we understand the way God accepts us, it becomes natural, (with one accord and with one voice) for us to glorify God.

**<sup>7</sup>Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.**

Our job as Christians is to accept (be accepting of) each other, remembering that Christ accepted us with all of our warts and bruises and whatever condition we were in when we came to him. We are to treat our brothers and sisters as Christ treated us. In doing this, we glorify God.

**<sup>8</sup>For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers, <sup>9</sup>and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy; as it is written,**

**"THEREFORE I WILL GIVE PRAISE TO YOU AMONG THE GENTILES,  
AND I WILL SING TO YOUR NAME."**

**<sup>10</sup>Again he says,**

**"REJOICE, O GENTILES, WITH HIS PEOPLE."**

**<sup>11</sup>And again,**

**"PRAISE THE LORD ALL YOU GENTILES,  
AND LET ALL THE PEOPLES PRAISE HIM."**

**<sup>12</sup>Again Isaiah says,**

**"THERE SHALL COME THE ROOT OF JESSE,  
AND HE WHO ARISES TO RULE OVER THE GENTILES,  
IN HIM SHALL THE GENTILES HOPE."**

God has a plan to reconcile the Jews and the Gentiles. That plan is Christ. As we live, he is working out (continues to work out) that plan. Regardless of the great differences between Jews and Gentiles, Christ accepted us. That is God's plan. God announced it before he ever started (brought Christ to earth) and God continues to bring his plan to completion. That is what Paul is saying to the church in Rome.

In these verses, Paul uses quotes from Psalms (the Writings); Deuteronomy (the Law); and from Isaiah (the Prophets) to show that God is perfectly capable of working such things out. What Paul is saying here is, you do not need to separate or break apart because of these differences. You don't need to fight about these things or quit dealing with your brothers and sisters in Christ because you see things differently. You can work the problems out and God is honored and glorified when you do so.

He ends his advice from this section with a great benediction:

**<sup>13</sup>Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.**

These are wonderful wishes for anyone you care about and love. I wish someone would pray this prayer for me each day. What more could we wish for each day but to be filled with all joy and peace in believing so that we might abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit?

As far as Paul goes in his letter to the Church in Rome and the believers who worshiped together there, his letter could end here. There could be no better ending to the correspondence than these words.

The rest of Chapter 15 covers two themes:

- 1 – The Church in Rome
- 2 – Paul's ministry

**<sup>14</sup>And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.**

Paul is confident about the goodness and knowledge of his brothers and sisters in the church in Rome. He is not concerned that there is any deficit that will keep them from being able to function and grow together. Paul began his letter by stating that the faith of these people was known around the world. There was no doubt in his mind that they had been equipped to handle the word of God.

In this verse, he says three things about them – Great qualities they possess that we should strive to show in our churches and our personal lives:

- 1- They were full of goodness – Their motives (the attitude of their belief as expressed to the world) were right with God. God wants to see goodness and compassion displayed in his children and that is what the church in Rome showed.
- 2- They were filled with knowledge – They possessed the tools they needed to function as a church. Their base (knowledge) was sound. They understood the scriptures and were not operating from a lack of learning.
- 3- They were able to admonish each other – They had a spirit of togetherness in their congregation that allowed them open learning and growth and correction without bitterness or strife. To be able to admonish each other (give and accept admonishment) is a Godly attribute we would all be blessed to possess. So many of us can give admonishment all day long. Our problem comes in receiving. Evidently this was not the case with the church in Rome.

**<sup>15</sup>But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God, <sup>16</sup>to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.**

So what did Paul want to tell the church in Rome? Actually he lists three additional things he wants to share with them.

1 – Paul wants to share a bold reminder of the truth with the church in Rome. (**<sup>15</sup>But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again**). All of us forget things and need to be reminded occasionally, lest we forget. In Chapter 12, Paul has already said, **"You need your mind renewed by the Holy Spirit," (Romans 12:2)**. For many of us, it is why we find that we need to be in our place of worship each week – in order to be

reminded of life altering things that without reminders, we would likely forget. And so we come to Church and Sunday school to keep God's truths in front of us as a bold reminder.

2 – Next, Paul tells the church in Rome that they need a priestly ministry. **(because of the grace that was given me from God, <sup>16</sup>to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God).** In a way, Paul tells the church in Rome that not only do they need to be reminded of the truth, but they need an example (a minister) to follow, in a function like the priest in the temple. By example Paul wanted to show them the Gospel of God.

3 – The third thing Paul wants to accomplish is to that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. All of us need this. We need to have lives that are sanctified by the Holy Spirit. It is that touch of God that brings life into us.

In spite of the three things (goodness, knowledge and the ability to admonish each other) the church in Rome had, they still needed the things Paul intended to share. We need them too – constant reminders of God's truth, a priestly model to follow and the sanctifying presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Paul will now tell the church in Rome three things about his ministry:

- 1 - The principles he has worked under
- 2 - The practice by which he carried them out
- 3 - The power that he relied upon

**<sup>17</sup>Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God. <sup>18</sup>For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, <sup>19</sup>in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. <sup>20</sup>And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, so that I would not build on another man's foundation;**

Five things about the principles of Paul's ministry:

1 – Everywhere Paul went, he found a reason for Boasting (Glorying, Rejoicing) in the things pertaining to God. Why? Everywhere Paul went, there was darkness and as he began to share God's good news through Christ, the light began to spread. It has been said that "Paul scattered churches across the areas covered in his journeys like salt across a salad bowl." There was no doubt that Paul was given a ministry (by God) to be effective, This brought him Joy, Rejoicing and Boasting. Wherever Paul went, people (lives) were changed and eternity was impacted. This is the kind of ministry Paul was given. In verse 18, he shares the secret of his ministry.

**<sup>18</sup>For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed,**

This is the greatest lesson God has to teach us. We were designed not to do things that make God happy, but to let God work through us. This is what Paul meant when he wrote,

**"what Christ has accomplished through me"**

2 - Life is not what we have done for God. It is what God has done through us. That was Paul's secret of his ministry - God working God's work through Paul (a surrendered man). It probably took God ten years to teach Paul this truth, but when Paul finally learned the lesson God had for him, God began to set the world on fire through Paul – the surrendered man.

**19a in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit;**

3 - These were the gifts God Gave to Paul to accomplish God's will through Paul's life. Everywhere Paul went, he performed signs and wonders of God's power – to demonstrate the power of the spirit of God. The signs and wonders were not Paul. They were God working through Paul. They were the signs of the life of an Apostle.

4 - Paul's life was a constant demonstration of the power of God to change lives.

**19b so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.**

From Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, God used Paul to change lives by the work he gave him to do – to preach the Gospel of Christ.

Jerusalem is on the lower eastern corner of the Mediterranean Sea, in Asia. Paul traveled up and down that coast, on into what we call Turkey, in Asia Minor, up and across the Dardanelles, into Europe, then into Macedonia and Greece. He had gone, as he indicates, into what we call Yugoslavia (Illyricum).

5 - As verse 20 states, the very nature of his ministry was to spread the Gospel where others had not worked.

**20 And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, so that I would not build on another man's foundation; 21 but as it is written,**

**"THEY WHO HAD NO NEWS OF HIM SHALL SEE,  
AND THEY WHO HAVE NOT HEARD SHALL UNDERSTAND."**

Paul was a pioneer, never intending to add to another man's work, but to allow God to take him to places where the Gospel had not yet reached. Some Christians are "settlers", who want to set up a house on the courthouse square and let the mayor and aldermen run the town. Others are pioneers, who want to cross over the mountain and experience the wilds firsthand. They want to go to new areas that have never been touched adequately.

So, How did Paul Practice his ministry?

**22 For this reason I have often been prevented from coming to you; 23 but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you 24 whenever I go to Spain--for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while—**

Paul's ministry always involved planning for the future and he had always wanted to go - first to Rome and then to Spain – a pioneer's destination.

**25 but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints. 26 For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. 27 Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to**

**them also in material things. <sup>28</sup>Therefore, when I have finished this, and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs, I will go on by way of you to Spain.**

Paul knew where he wanted to go, but he was faithful to honor his old commitments and so He was first going back to Jerusalem to serve the Saints (believers) there by delivering a gift from the believers in Macedonia and Achaia for the poor in Jerusalem – in response to the famine there. It is interesting that Paul does not say he is going to Jerusalem to preach. He is going there on a relief mission journey.

The third Practice of Paul's ministry was his trust in the power of God.

**<sup>29</sup>I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.**

Paul counted on God to come through for him in his ministry. He was about God's business relying fully on God's power and trusting fully in that power to deliver full blessings.

**<sup>30</sup>Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, <sup>31</sup>that I may be rescued from those who are disobedient in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints; <sup>32</sup>so that I may come to you in joy by the will of God and find refreshing rest in your company. <sup>33</sup>Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.**

Why has Paul's ministry lasted 2000 years? Why were doors opened to Paul that spread the Gospel all over the known world of that time? If Paul were here, he would assure us that the prayers of God's people were the strength of his ministry. Paul was very knowledgeable of the power of prayer and he always did two things;

1 – He prayed for those he met unceasingly “I always mention you in my prayers”

2 – He always asked those under his ministry to pray for him (**strive together with me in your prayers to God for me,**) In Paul's mind and in truth, they were a part of his ministry through their prayers. The very best thing we can do is pray for each other.

What is the basis of the power of prayer?

**1 - by our Lord Jesus Christ**

**2 - by the love of the Spirit**

Prayer is born of the spirit of God within us, which awakens a desire to help through a sense of love and compassion for others. We pray to honor our Lord Jesus Christ – because he told us to pray. When we realize that the honor of Christ is involved (Before his Father) and the love of the spirit is fulfilled when we pray, then we really begin to pray and the power of the Holy Spirit really begins to operate within us.

Paul knew this and so he asked the Romans “**to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me,**”. Paul knew the power of corporate prayer, coming from all of us, for each other and that is what he asked from his brothers and sisters in Rome.