

Verse 1 *We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.*

Verse 2 *Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.*

Verse 3 *For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.*

These first three verses of Romans 15 form a strong principle of God for the care of those in the body of Christ who are weak. There are at least two important points for us to remember in our fellowship with the members of Christ's body:

- (1) The first is not to please ourselves. This first rule, by its very strict requirement, makes it a rather elite group. This is due simply to the fact that most of us are selfish at heart.
- (2) The second is to learn to please our neighbor for his good to edification.

- **Romans 14:19** *Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.*

It is easy to understand how having this attitude in all of our fellowship would seriously change our interactions with each other and fulfill the requirement of Verse 1; to bear the infirmities of the weak. Again, these first three verses of Chapter 15 are the answer of the Spirit for the needs expressed in Chapter 14. The subject of edification for the body of Christ occupy a large amount of Paul's exhortations and rightly so. It is the heart of the important teaching of unity. We are not leaving out the importance of love in making unity strong, but realize that to edify one another is a foremost quality of love. Now remember our role model for all of this is Jesus Christ. Note, our learning to love and edify one another is no small matter. Jesus said, "The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me." It is obvious that our Lord considered this very important because He said these reproaches fell on Him and He took them to the cross for our sake. We see Christ in the following verses of Psalm 69:

- **Psalm 69:7** *Because for thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face.*
- **Verse 9** *For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.*
- **Verse 10** *When I wept, and chastened my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach.*
- **Verse 19** *Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonor: mine adversaries are all before thee.*
- **Verse 20** *Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.*

It is not optional for us to practice this truth because it is the very heart of the Gospel and our relationship with each other. (See verse 1 of chapter 14). This verse at once connects us with **Romans 15:1**.

- **Matthew 11:28-30** *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

Also, Jesus assures us that His care was for the weak.

A point of caution: The weak that we meet often do not consider themselves weak; therefore, requiring a great deal of patience on the part of the so-called strong. When the weak are finally won, they make strong Christians and good friends. Often they are very fruitful.

How it must please the Lord when one of His loved ones gives himself for the edifying of the weak. Paul says, "we labor that whether present or absent, we may be accepted (well pleasing) to Him.

Verse 4 *For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*

Because of Paul's broad knowledge of the Old Testament, he is saying to us these instructions are for our learning.

- **1 Corinthians 10:11** *Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.*

For us, this understanding becomes a strong source of patience and comfort, and the result is hope. Having this hope and comfort in our daily experiences is a great blessing of the Spirit for us. Any believer can step out of his state of earthly misery into the glorious blessings of the scriptures and be comforted in most of his troubles.

- **2 Corinthians 1:4** *Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.*

Not only are the things written before for our learning, but also to give us strong continuity with the Old Testament people and how God dealt with them. God never changes; His principles of righteousness, love, and eternal hope remains the same. They are a part of us and we are a part of them. It's called the family of God.

Verse 5 *Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus:*

The unity here is a likemindedness in patience and consolation, rather than an organizational or doctrinal unity. These are not bad unity traits, but the unity Paul desires here is a very practical unity of receiving one another in love, patience, and consolation. This is the subject of chapter 14 and the first part of chapter 15.

"According to Christ Jesus" This draws our attention to verses 2 & 3 "let us please our neighbor for his good to edification" and "as Christ pleased not Himself." The result of this kind of unity is that of receiving one another as Christ received us.

- **John 13:35** *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*

Verse 6 *That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.* When we are walking together in love, then there will be patience with each other. The result is we are going to raise our voices in a unison that will glorify God. This ability to glorify God is greatly lacking in our churches today. We build great buildings, collect large sums of money for evangelistic efforts, but our unity in praise of God is somehow lacking.

Verse 7 *Wherfore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.*

This verse is summarizing the intent of both chapters 14 & 15. The exhortation is to receive each other as Christ received us. We were all different. Some were socially very acceptable, others less so. Some poor, some rich. The model was, "as Christ received us." This is the truth that makes Christianity the shining pearl that it is.

Verse 8 Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers:

The reason Paul brought up the subject of Christ's ministry while on earth was because there was a lack of receiving one another among the Jews and Gentiles of the Church. The purpose was to show God had not forgotten the Jews; and the Gentiles should accept God's purposes for the Jew. That purpose included His work in the Gentile community. Jesus' ministry among the Jews was to show that God intended to keep His promises to the Jews. For the Gentiles to realize this caused them to have more trust in God's promises to them.

Verse 9 And that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.

When we see God's mercy being displayed, it initiates praise to God. Also, it causes us to trust Him more in our own lives. God's plans to bring the Gentiles into His family had been prophesied long ago, and now it is happening. This gave cause for great rejoicing among the Gentiles. Paul, of course knowing this, was emboldened to declare to the world the mercy and love of God to mankind.

- **Ephesians 2:19-20** Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.

Verse 10 And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with His people.

Verse 11 And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud Him, all ye people.

These verses show us how God desires our humility in praise before Him. In **Deuteronomy 32:43**, we also realize God will avenge His people and will bring vengeance on the adversaries.

- **Deuteronomy 32:43** Rejoice, O ye nations, with His people: for He will avenge the blood of His servants, and will render vengeance to His adversaries, and will be merciful unto His land, and to His people.
- **Psalm 117:1-2** O praise the Lord, all ye nations: praise Him, all ye people. For His merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the Lord endureth for ever. Praise ye the Lord.
- **Psalm 117:1-2** allows us a little insight to the eternal purposes of God for all the world. His truth will endure forever. God will be, for all eternity, showing us His great mercy. Paul was rejoicing to be a part of God's eternal plan.

Verse 12 And again, Isaiah saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and He that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in Him shall the Gentiles trust.

The scriptures in this verse are connecting us with the plans of God from the past ages. In this case, the prophecy is 750 years before Christ showing that Jesus would come and "rise to reign" over the Gentiles. The interesting thing is all this blessing to the Gentiles is connected to God's blessing to the Jews.

- **Acts 15:13-16** And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up.

Verse 13 Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

Now, on the basis of these great blessings, Paul seems to be saying "lets take advantage of these promises." A wonderful truth is taught here, and that is, we can enjoy these blessings by believing. Paul is calling our God the God of hope. The purpose here is that we all, by believing, can have joy and peace as our hope abounds in Christ. Through this hope we can look for the exaltation of Christ and our place with Him.

- **Philippians 3:20-21** *For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.*

Verse 14 And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

Neither Paul or Peter had preached in Rome, at this time. Many of the people in the church at Rome had migrated there from many countries, especially Israel. In the earlier chapter 1:8, Paul had said their faith was spoken of throughout the world. In verse eleven of that chapter, He said he wanted to impart some spiritual gift that they would be established.

Verse 15 Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God,

Verse 16 That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

In these verses, Paul is introducing them to the fact that he has been called to minister to the Gentiles. It is interesting also that he is saying the offering up of the Gentiles would be acceptable.

- **2 Corinthians 11:2** *For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*
- **Galatians 2:7** *But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter;*

Verse 17 I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God. We understand from this verse that Paul had reason to glory because of his being sent to the Gentiles.

- **Acts 9:15** *But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.*

He considered his calling to the Gentiles to be as official as was the Levitical Priesthood who served at the altar.

Verse 18 For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed,

This Apostle was careful not to infringe on any of the other men who preached to the Jews or Gentiles. I think it is helpful to quote form the following verses

- **2 Corinthians 10:13-15** *But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you. For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ: Not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men's labors; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly,*

Verse 19 *Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.*

The ministry God gave to Paul could only be fulfilled by the power of the Spirit working in him. Hence, the Gospel went forth from Jerusalem, north around the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea, west to Greece and north to Illyricum, which is north of Macedonian; a distance of well over 2000 miles, not considering all of the smaller side trips. He walked most of that distance. There was the weather always to be considered as well as robbers, religious zealots, and wild beasts. Yet, he said, "I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ all the way. We sometimes think we have it rough. God help us!"

Verse 20 *Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation:*

"strived" - to love, honor, esteem or respect, to be ambitious, make it a point of honor.

- **Romans 1:15** *So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also*

This man had a calling and an anointing and he gave his whole being to the work, preaching the Gospel where Jesus Christ had not been named. Can we even imagine going to a place where the people had never heard of the name of Jesus and Paul possibly did not know their language? What a formidable task. Yet Paul relished this assignment from the Lord. He wanted to make sure a proper foundation was established.

- **1 Corinthians 3:10** *10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.*

Verse 21 *But as it is written, To whom He was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.*

There is a truth here that the Church needs to be aware of. Some of the times, we face situations that seem impossible to us. However, they are not impossible for the Lord. Our business is to take the Gospel. God will be everything we need to do the job.

- **Isaiah 52:15** *So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at Him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.*

Verse 22 *For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you.*

There will be many hinderances, but notice what God said to Abraham.

- **Genesis 18:14** *Is any thing too hard for the Lord? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.*

Verse 23 *But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you;*

There were two reasons why Paul had no more place in these parts.

1. He had preached and established the Gospel and churches as God had directed.
2. Those who hindered him had become well known.

- **2 Timothy 1:15** *This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.*

The desire which God had put in Paul's heart many years ago were beginning to come to pass. His time in Rome was an important period in his life in the work of presenting the Gospel. It was in Rome that he preached, but more importantly, the writing of what we call the Prison Epistles took place. The word of the Gospel became much richer for these epistles.

Verse 24 *Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company.*

Paul had longed for quite some time to visit Rome, but it seems the stronger desire was to visit Spain. There, he would be preaching Christ in a place that had not had the Gospel before. Christ had not been named there.

- **Romans 1:11** *For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;*

His deep desire was to make them acquainted with the grace of God. Also, he wanted some of the brothers from the church at Rome to accompany him on his way to Spain. This was a common practice because of the dangers of travel. However, it is doubtful that he ever made the journey to Spain.

Verse 25 *But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.*

The trip to Jerusalem had been in planning for a long time and Paul had encouraged the Christians of these Gentile churches to send a gift to the poor at Jerusalem.

Verse 26 *For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.*

Verse 27 *It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.*

In regards to verse 16, see the following:

- **2 Corinthians 9:2** *For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;*

This was a deliberate action on Paul's part, because it represented the love of those Gentiles for their Jewish brothers who sent them the Gospel.

- **2 Corinthians 8:1-4** *Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea,*

and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; Praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

Verse 28 *When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.*

It was important to Paul to fulfill this ministry of giving because it became such a blessing to the poor at Jerusalem and also to the giver.

- **2 Corinthians 9:12** *For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God;*

Verse 29 *And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.*

What confidence was in Paul to believe God would enable him to minister to the Christians at Rome in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ. We see that same confidence in his prayer for the Christians at Ephesus.

- **Ephesians 3:19** *And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.*

Verse 30 *Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me;*

It is amazing to us how God makes His work in this world depend on the prayers of His people. Even His process of judgment waits for the prayers of His people.

- **Revelation 5:8** *And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.*

The welfare, peace, and quietness of His people is often dependent on prayers.

- **1 Timothy 2:1&2** *I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; 2 For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.*

The word strive is the same Greek word for wrestling contestants. It expresses agonizing in prayer.

Verse 31 *That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints;*

The ones in Judea who did not believe were very antagonistic to Paul and this new way. They would attempt to discourage the receiving of a gift from Gentile believers. There was also the Pharisees that opposed Paul. They knew he was not following the rules of Moses. Therefore, there were many dangers for Paul to go to Jerusalem. Paul was determined on going, and God used it for many good reasons; one of which was to take him to Rome.

Verse 32 *That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed.*

The way Paul could go to Rome and feel successful was for his offering to be received by the Christians in Jerusalem. We realize his trip to Rome was to be hindered for two years. This was his imprisonment in Caesarea.

Verse 33 *Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.*

This shows how the Apostle's heart was fully at peace and how he fully believed he was in God's will. Add to all this his intense love for the saints in Rome.