

Romans 15:1-10 (NKJV)

1 We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

2 Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification.

3 For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, *“The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me.”*

1

Rom. 15:4 For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

5 Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus,

6 that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2

Rom. 15:7 Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.

8 Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers,

9 and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written: *“For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, And sing to Your name.”*

10 And again he says: *“Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!”*

3

- One day, after all mankind has been resurrected, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father
- The result of that bowing and confessing will be universal worship of the Lamb of God

Rev 5:13 EVERY creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: “Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!”

4

- God will be worshipped universally throughout the ages by every human being who has ever lived on planet Earth
- But that is NOT the case in our present age, not even within the church of Jesus Christ
- The major obstacle standing in the way of glorifying God in the church at Rome is division and disunity – and that is the same problem in the modern church

5

- The particular problem in Rome in Paul’s day was that the Jewish believers were finding it difficult to let go of their Jewish identifiers – observing the feast days and sabbaths and dietary restrictions
- The Gentiles did not have this problem, for they were never subject to any law
- They found it easier to enjoy their freedom in Christ – that is, freedom to obey Him – as opposed to the Jews, who felt compelled to continue living as Jews, distinct in the culture

6

Jan Bonda, *The One Purpose of God*:

Just imagine: a church in which some observe the Sabbath in honor of the Lord, while some feel that this day has no special significance; a church in which some refrain from eating certain things to honor the Lord, while others do not refrain from eating certain things in honor of the Lord! That was the situation (Rom. 14:6). One group does in honor of the Lord what the other group refuses to do in honor of the same Lord. How can the members there “live in harmony with one another,” and “with one voice glorify” God, as Paul writes in 15:5-6?

7

Paul reiterates what he taught in ch. 14:

Rom 15:1 We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

- By way of application, are you willing to forego certain behaviors and activities while in the presence of others who are weaker, so as not to cause them to stumble?

8

Zane Hodges:

(Of course, this injunction has general application well beyond the issue of eating and drinking. This is a great principle for marriage, sports teams, work, driving, neighborhoods, and all of life.) While there is nothing wrong with believers enjoying the things God has given us to enjoy (cf. 1 Tim 6:17), we must not stubbornly do so while knowingly injuring other believers in our church.”

9

- How does this apply in the modern church?

Zane Hodges:

What Paul has in mind is situations where the weaker brother is directly present; that is, any time we are breaking bread together. We are not enjoined to live in fear that our private actions will hurt the weaker brother. We should simply make sure that we do not flaunt our liberty.

- However, this is not merely to be one way!
- Paul urges *mutual acceptance*

10

Rom 14:3 Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him.

- Those who are *weak* – who cannot do in good conscience what those who are *strong* can do – must not get offended by the freedom of the strong, as long as it doesn’t violate God’s moral laws
- Receiving one another must be done lovingly, not begrudgingly – “on both sides of the aisle,” so to speak

11

- When genuine love is the spirit within the church of Jesus Christ, there will be harmony and unity

- Paul summarizes what should be the spirit of believers within the church of Jesus Christ:

Rom 15:2 Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification.

- Are you willing to do what is necessary to please your brothers and sisters in Christ for *their* good, for the purpose of building *them* up?

12

Three motivations for pleasing our Christian brethren:

1. The example of Jesus

Rom 15:3 For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me."

- Jesus did not live to please Himself, but to please the Father
- The latter half of this verse is a quote from Psalm 69:9b – What does it mean?

13

- When Jesus was on Earth, He was despised and rejected by the Jewish people
- They were actually reproaching God Himself, but Jesus – the incarnation of God on Earth – bore the brunt of it
- Knowing this, we should be willing to please others over and above ourselves

14

Three motivations for pleasing our Christian brethren:

2. The hope of future reward

Rom 15:4 For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

- The *things written before* include the OT and very likely the NT epistles already written – at least James and Galatians, perhaps more

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- The OT prophets spoke of the coming Messianic kingdom, which Jesus did not launch at His first coming
- Thus, those who believe Jesus to be the Messiah long for His return and the establishment of His kingdom
- Many believers desire to be considered worthy of ruling as His bride and co-regents in the kingdom
- This hope should motivate us as believers to live peaceably with other believers

16

- Our verdict at the Judgment Seat is at stake, as Paul has already pointed out:

Rom 14:10 But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

17

Three motivations for pleasing our Christian brethren:

3. The prospect of glorifying God

Rom 15:5-6 Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth [voice] glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

7 Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.

18

- When weaker brethren and stronger brethren have a healthy respect for one another and receive one another as Paul admonishes, then they are like-minded and glorify God together
- When believers are at odds with other believers in their local church, and not receiving one another in a spirit of love, there is not a spirit of unity and harmony and like-mindedness, and God is not being glorified
- That is tragic, especially in light of future, universal glory that will be given to God

19

- God wants believers to glorify Him NOW through their unified voices
 - Those who do, will be rewarded
- Rom 15:5-6 (HCSB) Now may the God who gives endurance and encouragement allow you to live in harmony with one another, according to the command of Christ Jesus, so that you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ with a united mind and voice.
- We need to receive one another as Jesus received all of us, so we can glorify Him (v. 7)

20

Paul continues with a series of 4 glorious quotations from the OT:

Rom 15:8-9 Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written: *“For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, and sing to Your name.”*

- Quoted from Psalm 18:49, which King David sang as praise to the Lord, after God had delivered all of his enemies

21

- Paul says the Messiah came to confirm the promises made to your forefathers and so that the Gentiles might share in the blessings of those promises, glorifying God for His great mercy

Rom 15:10 And again he says: *“Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!”* (quotation from Deut. 32:43)

11 And again: *“Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!”* (quotation from Ps. 117:1)

22

- How magnificent! Jews and Gentiles rejoicing and glorifying God together!
- These quotations and their original sources in the OT are obviously referring to the coming Messianic kingdom

Rom 15:12 And again, Isaiah says: *“There shall be a root of Jesse; and He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in Him the Gentiles shall hope.”* (quotation from Isa. 11:10)

- This passage is also Messianic – about the wolf and lamb dwelling peaceably

23

Jan Bonda:

Paul viewed the church of Jews and Gentiles as the beachhead to God’s future. That future was, “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people,” and: “Let all the peoples praise him” (15:10-11). The church was a beginning of this future: There, already, the Gentiles rejoiced together with his people.

24

Jan Bonda (cont'd):

If this venture were to end in failure, if in the church the non-Jewish members could not praise him together with the Jewish members, then this praise of God by all nations together with his people Israel would never come about. This is Paul's motive when he writes, "Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God."

25

- God wants the Gentile believers to receive the Jewish believers, *as Jews*
- Their unique identification as God's chosen people – as seen through their dietary restrictions and observance of special days distinguishes them from the Gentiles
- The Jews, however, must not expect the Gentile believers to become Jewish in their identity
- The two groups must receive one another in a spirit of love and sensitivity

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- Through this show of love between the two nationalistic groups, the church of Jesus Christ will be portraying the glorious coming Messianic kingdom, in which Jews and Gentiles will live as one people under Messiah
- If the church fails in this by segregating themselves, then the picture that God intends to convey by the church will not be portrayed to the world

27

Thus Paul prays for the church: Rom 15:13 Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

- Paul wants the believers at Rome to be filled with joy & peace as they believe God about the importance of accepting one another
- If they will do so, in the power of the Holy Spirit, they will abound in hope – that is, they will confidently expect a glorious future kingdom of Jews and Gentiles dwelling together peaceably

28

Jan Bonda:

Bonda: This blessing involves a mandate: "Welcome one another." Jews and non-Jews in the church must accept each other as Christ has accepted them: the Jews as Jewish and the Gentiles as Gentile. As long as the church refuses to do this, she will not be filled with this hope for the world of which Paul speaks.

- Thus, Paul focuses his ministry on four things (see vs. 14-21):

29

Rom 15:14 Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

15 Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on some points, as reminding you, because of the grace given to me by God,

16 that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

30

Rom. 15:17 Therefore I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus in the things which pertain to God.

18 For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient—

19 in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

31

Rom. 15:20 And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation,

21 but as it is written: *"To whom He was not announced, they shall see; and those who have not heard shall understand."*

32

- Paul starts by commending the church in v. 14, referring to them as "full of goodness"
- He also compliments them as being "able also to admonish (warn, reprove) one another"
- Interestingly, this word is used in view of the Judgment Seat of Christ (v. 10)
- From the Greek word translated *admonish* we get the idea of nouthetic counseling, which is the idea of counseling others about what they should avoid in their spiritual lives
- Only *spiritual* believers are able to do this

33

Paul continues by mentioning at least four ways in which he ministered:

- a) He taught the gospel of God (v. 16 – truths about initial salvation and believing on Jesus for eternal (age-lasting) life)
- b) He preached the gospel of Christ (v. 19), which is the gospel of kingdom inheritance
- c) He helped the Gentiles become obedient (v. 18) and sanctified by the Holy Spirit (v. 16), so that they might be acceptable to God (justified in a behavioral sense)

34

Four ways in which Paul ministered (cont'd):

- d) He helped the Gentiles see the debt of gratitude they owe to the Jews for becoming "partakers of their spiritual things" (v. 27)
- In so doing, the Gentiles will receive the Jews and portray to the world the unity amongst believers and the ultimate unity in Christ's Messianic kingdom
- Paul says he preached and taught and ministered these things starting at Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum

35

- We know he ministered on his missionary journeys throughout Asia Minor and even Greece
- But apparently, he went as far as Illyricum, though we don't read anything about this in the book of Acts
- Illyricum is the southern part of eastern Europe, separated from Italy by the Adriatic Sea
- Today, this includes the countries Slovenia, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, Albania, Macedonia

36

- Paul said he ministered the gospel everywhere where Christ was not already named – this could mean where Christ was not readily being confessed
- This is normal protocol for missionaries
- Perhaps that's why he had not yet gone to Rome, because the gospel was already well-established in that region and the church of Jesus Christ had already formed
- Paul then expressed his desire to visit them in Rome on his way to Spain

37

Rom 15:22 For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you.

23 But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you,

24 whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while.

38

- Paul hopes they will support him financially on his journey to Spain
- Notice that he doesn't mention this in his introduction in ch. 1 – and why is that?
- He knows they are not spiritually ready to help him – they have division and disunity in their midst due to ethnic prejudices
- The Greeks look down upon the Jews and upon the barbarians (they are the more primitive Gentiles in the far reaches of the Roman empire, in Spain, for instance)

39

- Paul is hopeful that now that they have read his letter, they will change their attitudes and accept his mission to Spain, even to the extent of supporting him
- But before he goes to Rome to visit with them, he must first go to Jerusalem
- He shares the reason for visiting Jerusalem so that they will pray for him and appreciate the Jewish people all the more
- He uses the believers of Macedonia/Achaia as examples to motivate the Roman Christians

40

Rom 15:25 But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints.

26 For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem.

27 It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things.

41

Rom 15:28 Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain.

29 But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

30 Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me,

42

Rom 15:31 that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints,

32 that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you.

- Paul hopes to motivate the Gentile believers to accept the Jews by using the example of the Macedonians and Achaians

43

- The Gentiles in those regions of Greece have collected a substantial offering for the Jewish believers in Jerusalem who are suffering in poverty

- In v. 27 Paul says it pleased the Gentiles to do this, for they feel as if they owe a spiritual debt to the Jews for bringing them Messiah

- So the least they can do is pay back the debt in small measure through a material (i.e., monetary) gift to help their brethren

44

- Paul expects to visit the Roman Christians after he has delivered the offering to the Jerusalem church

- We know from our historical vantage point that Paul's life is threatened in Jerusalem by the Jews who want to kill him

- For his own protection the Romans arrest Paul and put him on trial, and then he appeals to the Caesar

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- So he does eventually make it to Rome, but not on his timetable and not freely – he arrives under arrest and under guard by the Romans

- He is put under house arrest in Rome while awaiting trial

- Of course, Paul doesn't know any of this when he is writing the epistle to the Romans, because it hasn't happened yet

- We know, because we have the advantage of reading the book of Acts and seeing the end of the story

46

- But one thing is clear from v. 31 – Paul expects trouble in Jerusalem from those Jews who do not believe Jesus is Messiah, so he urges the Roman Christians to pray for his Jerusalem ministry, that they would be receptive

- Were the Jews in Jerusalem receptive?

Acts 21:19 When he had greeted them [i.e., James and the elders of the Jerusalem church], he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.

47

Acts 21:20 And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law;

21 but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs."

48

- James and the elders put pressure on Paul to demonstrate his solidarity with the Jews by accompanying four Jewish men to the temple to conclude their temporary Nazirite vows
- The sponsor would not only show support but also pay their expenses

Acts 21:24 Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law.

49

- Paul should never have agreed to this
- While at the temple, Jews from Asia (who had persecuted him there) cause an uproar and are going to kill him
- But at just the right moment, the Roman soldiers rush in and take him into custody for his own safety

50

Bonda explains how this affects the church at Rome:

Many in Jerusalem had grave misgivings with regard to Paul's work among the Gentiles. The story of what happened when he arrived illustrates this: Thousands of Jews have come to believe, and "all are zealous for the law." They feared that Paul's work would result in churches that would relinquish the tie with the Jewish people and its service to God (Acts 21:20-21).

51

Bonda (cont'd):

Precisely the behavior of the strong [Gentile believers] in Rome was apt to strengthen those doubts. As a result the Jerusalem church might refuse to accept the tangible proof of fellowship ([the offering from Macedonia] Rom. 15:31). Thus these Gentile churches — God's beachhead to the nations — would be detached from Israel, the people through which God seeks to bring about his saving plan for all humanity. The church in Rome had to be aware of what was at stake! (emphasis added)

52

- The mission to Jerusalem is critical!
- Paul desperately needs the prayers of the Roman believers, because he knows there is tension arising from the legalistic Jews who insist the Gentiles must become proselytes if they are to be righteous before God
- This legalism and divisiveness will destroy the unity God desires between Jewish believers and the Gentile believers

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- Furthermore, it will rob God of the glory that is due to Him, and it will rob the world of the beautiful picture of what God intends to accomplish in the Millennium
- Thus, Paul's mission is to UNITE Jew and Gentile in Christ and, to that end, he urges the strong to accept the weak and the weak not to judge the strong
- If they will unite in this matter then, as Paul says in v. 6, they will "with one mind and one mouth [voice] glorify ... God"

54

- Moreover, they will picture in advance – as Paul says in vs. 9-12 – the glorious unity of Jews and Gentiles in the coming Messianic kingdom
- How has the church progressed in this goal throughout the centuries? MISERABLY
- Two reasons for this:
- First, the Judaizers put tremendous pressure on Christians, insisting that to live righteously and become sanctified unto reward, they must keep the OT rituals

55

- Paul taught vigorously against this, as seen in Gal. and the earlier chapters of Rom.
- Continuing to observe the markers of Jewishness to honor the Lord is one thing, which the Gentiles could accept
- But requiring it as a matter of soul-salvation is legalism, which Paul condemned
- Second, the church has progressed miserably in its goal, because the Gentile believers became repulsed by the aggressiveness and viciousness of these Judaizers who were trying to make them Jewish

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- This prompted the Gentile believers to further segregate themselves from the Jewish believers
- Thus, the churches were not becoming unified, but more divided
- In fact, this intensified through the early centuries, to the point that the Jewish believers started their own Messianic congregations, segregated from their Gentile brethren – and the Gentiles were glad to let them go their separate ways

57

- That is why today only a very tiny percentage of churches are comprised of Jewish believers
- Most of the Jewish believers have formed Messianic congregations, which are very Jewish by nature, geared to the Jewish dietary restrictions and observance of sabbaths and feast days
- Gentiles are welcome, but they are essentially viewed as the weaker brethren, which seems to be the opposite of what Paul intended for the church

58

- On the Gentile side of things, animosity toward the Jews increased through the early centuries

Bonda: After two centuries the church in Rome had become a church which fiercely opposed the Jews of the synagogue. The replacement doctrine, the teaching of the substitution of the church for Israel, had taken hold. The vast majority of Jews had rejected their Messiah, and that had sealed the fate of the Jewish people. Jerusalem was destroyed, and its temple was no more. God no longer needed them.

59

Bonda (cont'd):

A new people replaced the former people. The church grew, and Christianity became the official religion of the empire. The victory of the Christian faith was ample proof that the God of Israel was now the God of the church and no longer the God of the Jews. The pride of the Gentiles had persisted and done its work. The Gentile Christians wanted distance: Christians had nothing to do with Jews!

60

Bonda quotes a Jewish Christian scholar, Jacob Jocz, as saying:

The church of history has shown herself to be the greatest enemy of the Jewish people. The church has, therefore, been the first and foremost stumbling block in Jewish appreciation of Jesus.

- The Reformation did not change any of this
- In fact, it fueled the fires, as Martin Luther was avowedly antisemitic, holding to replacement theology, and so was Calvin

61

- Satan hijacked the Reformation!
- The irony is that today Reformation theology pervades the church of Jesus Christ, including fundamentalist churches
- Many doctrines that are readily taught as orthodox today are actually heretical
- But Satan has spun it the other direction, so that those who teach biblical doctrines are branded as heretics

62

- I urgently call Christianity to take off Reformation glasses and start viewing the NT biblically rather than theologically
- My prayer is that churches everywhere will have the spirit of Rom. 15:6 – that we might “with one mind and one voice glorify” God!
- And, as v. 33 says, may “the God of peace be with [us] all” Amen!

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