

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

“infirmities” = a scruple of conscience

The wording of the NLT states it more clearly: *We may know that these things make no difference, but we cannot just go ahead and do them to please ourselves. We must be considerate of the doubts and fears of those who think these things are wrong.*

Again, the concern of a believer with strong faith should also reflect a desire to encourage and strengthen the one who that is weaker in faith—even if it requires one to deny oneself personal pleasure or gratification in the process. It’s a matter of having the right priorities and loving your neighbor as yourself.

Rom. 15:2 Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.

I like the CJB translation of this verse: *Each of us should please his neighbor and act for his good, thus building him up.*

The Greek for the word *please* referenced making yourself agreeable. This statement is applicable to “every one” who is a believer. Both the weak and the strong in faith should have the mindset of strengthening the body of Christ through their words and actions. To strengthen one believer is to strengthen the body.

Rom. 15:3 For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.

Written where?

Psalm 69:9 For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.

Christ didn’t live so as to bring Himself personal glory. His desire was to do the will of the Father and glorify the Father.

John 5:30 I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.

John 17:1 These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:

Jesus suffered the reproach of men because He was acting in obedience to His Father. By rejecting His Son, they were rejecting God.

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

This is a beautiful explanation of the purpose of the Word of God. It was written for our learning, to give us understanding. In the pages of scripture we are shown the character of God through His dealings with nations and individuals—principally Israel and the Jews. That understanding should strengthen us to have patience and endurance and should comfort us through the trials of life as we confidently look forward to the rest of His word / prophecies / promises being fulfilled. Our life is but a vapor. Nothing touches the child of God that He does not allow for “good” according to His purposes. Our future is secure in the presence of God. He is coming again!!

Rom. 15:5 Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus:

Rom. 15:6 That ye may with one mind *and* one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Again, I like the wording of the CJB.

And may God, the source of encouragement and patience, give you the same attitude among yourselves as the Messiah Yeshua had, so that with one accord and with one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah.

As a mom, I know I have sometimes felt like I had run out of patience. There have been times in my life when I have given in to self-pity and discouragement. As believers, God is the source from which we are to draw patience, comfort and encouragement. His supply is never-ending. We have no excuse for “running out.” We have no excuse for “giving up.”

Evidently patience and encouragement are keys to establishing “likemindedness” among the brethren, and Christ exhibited a clear example of such a lifestyle. If we would but stop and think, we know this to be true. When we choose to exercise patience and be an encourager, we facilitate harmony and unity in the “church.” When we are focused on self and exhibit lack of patience without regard to what others think or need, we promote division in the “church.”

Unity of spirit is key to a powerful testimony before the world of unbelievers. I know I have used this scripture before, but it is a clear statement of this truth out of the mouth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

*John 17:20-23 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, **that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.** And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, **that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.***

It is a very sad statement of fact that today many pagan religions are more united and fervent in their commitment to their “gods” than the church is to God Almighty.

Verse 6 is a clear refutation of the Islamic belief that God has no Son. Scripture is full of the truth of God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. Scripture is either true or it isn't. It is either God's word or it isn't. You can't just accept the portions you like. Your eternal future will be decided by your acceptance or rejection of its truth.

Before leaving this verse, I think it is important to note that we are not just to glorify God in our minds, but also with our mouths. We are to be vocal about our faith. We are to share that faith with others.

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

Reminder, this is a word of exhortation to the body of believers. We are to receive each other with unconditional love just as Christ received us. Why? To bring glory to God the Father first and foremost. Any time we act so as to glorify God we are also acting so as to benefit the body of Christ and in benefit of self.

The Greek for the word *receive* references “admitting to friendship and hospitality.” The Greek for the word *glory* is a reference to showing “praise and worship.” When we honor the body of Christ through fellowship with one another and meeting each other's needs, we are actually praising and worshipping God.

Rom. 15:8 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:

Jesus was very clear that He had come to minister to the house of Israel, the Jews, the circumcision.

Matthew 15:24 But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

This truth was important since it was directly connected to God's promises made to the *fathers* (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob). The prophets were full of promises of the coming Messiah, and the Jewish people were eager for Him to come.

Genesis 22:15-18 And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

In covenant with David:

2Samuel 7:10-13 Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime, And as since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies. Also the LORD telleth thee that he will make thee an house. And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.

In revelation to Daniel:

Daniel 9:25 Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

The sad truth is that their expectation of Him was so different from the reality that they rejected Him.

Rom. 15:9 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.

Rom. 15:10 And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people.

Rom. 15:11 And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people.

Rom. 15:12 And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.

Even though Christ had come the first time in direct fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham and his descendants through Isaac and Jacob, the plan of God always included the salvation of the Gentile nations. Paul quotes from several Old Testament scriptures in support of this truth.

Verse 9 - *Psalms 18:49* Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and sing praises unto thy name.

Verse 10 - *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.

1Chronicles 16:31 Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice: and let men say among the nations, The LORD reigneth.

Verse 11 - *Psalms 117:1* O praise the LORD, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people.

Verse 12 - *Isaiah 11:1-2 & 10-11* And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest

upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD....And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.

The NIV Commentary made note of the fact that there is a natural progression from Israel praising God before the nations to the nations praising God with Israel to the nations praising God independently. When the Gentiles reach the point of praising God, it will be because they recognize His mercy and compassion in providing for them. That recognition will include the truth that that provision came through the nation of Israel according to God's original promise to Abraham.

Rom. 15:13 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.

Paul now gives expression to a wonderful prayer of blessing for this body of believers. The word *hope* is not a reference to wishful thinking; it is a reference to confident expectation and anticipated pleasure. The word *fill* is a reference to being crammed full to the point of overflowing. Note that God is the source of all the blessings referenced in this prayer. His supply to His children is limitless. It's through our knowledge of who HE IS that we can be confident in His word. Our hope, joy and peace are dependent on our faith in Him. And He doesn't leave us without help in the area of faith; He has given us the Holy Ghost, His very own Spirit, to empower us and strengthen our faith so that our hope is more than sufficient to repel the attack of the enemy as we live in anticipation of our eternity with Him according to all His promises.

Rom. 15:14 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.

As Paul begins to close his letter to the Romans, he gives some words of encouragement. Paul expresses confidence in these believers in three specific areas:

- They are full of goodness. – I think Paul is saying that he believes their hearts' desires are for things that are good and beneficial for the body of Christ.
- They are filled with all knowledge. – The Greek for the word *all* is a reference to being complete or whole. The context would reflect a knowledge base concerning what is *good*. God's character and His word have to be the source of that knowledge, and in that regard they have been well taught.
- They are able to admonish one another. – Based on the previous two observations, Paul is confident that they are qualified to *admonish*

(caution, gently reprove) one another. This would be an action of love on the part of the one giving the admonishment. It shows a concern for the individual as well as for the whole body of Christ. This takes us back to verse 7 where we learned that those types of actions are an expression of praise and worship to God.

Rom. 15:15 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,

Rom. 15:16 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.

“Nevertheless” – In spite of these areas of strength, you were in need of words of reminder and correction.

“brethren” – Paul is reminding them that he is one of their brothers in Christ; they are all part of the same spiritual family.

“boldly” = more daringly, with greater confidence than otherwise

Why is Paul so comfortable in asserting himself so strongly to this body of believers? Because of the *grace* given him by God. The Greek for the word *grace* is reference to “the divine influence on the heart.” God had personally instructed Paul to serve the Gentiles by teaching them about Jesus Christ, the good news of God’s provision for the salvation of mankind through His Son. God’s gospel would also include teaching about how to live in accordance with God’s will and His Word. The Gentiles become acceptable to God by accepting the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ, His Son, and are sanctified (purified, made more holy) through the teaching and direction of the Holy Spirit as they seek to grow in their relationship to God through submission and obedience to His will.

Rom. 15:17 I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God.

I like the wording of the CJB for this verse: *In union with the Messiah Yeshua, then, I have reason to be proud of my service to God....*

Key point: We never have a reason to glory in any action that is done in our own flesh. Any action that we take apart from the leading and empowerment of the Spirit that is ours through Jesus Christ is done with the wrong motive.

I think this is a source of real struggle for today’s Christian. Our culture is so obsessed with self and glorifying the individual. We are also a society that wants instant gratification and has little patience with people or processes. Abraham and Sarah at least waited ten years before attempting to intervene with their own efforts in “helping” God fulfill His promise to them. Just like Abraham and Sarah, we are quick to justify our actions by linking them to God’s Word and what we deem to be His will. I can’t help but wonder how much in our churches

today is done according to the will, timing and provision of man vs. the will, timing and provision of God. I believe many of these church leaders love the Lord but have been deceived in their hearts because of their own impatience and/or pride. Churches today operate according to business and marketing principles. Prayer as an effective means of seeking God's provision has become secondary. We say "Where God guides, He provides," but we act as if He needs our help in providing.

Rom. 15:18 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, Rom. 15:19 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.

Paul rejoiced in being a messenger, a vessel through whom Christ could touch the heart of the Gentiles. He was a messenger in word and deed; his actions were in accordance with his message. Paul was a vessel through whom the Holy Spirit worked mighty signs and wonders (miracles) to reach the unbelieving Gentiles. Paul gloried only as he knew that God had been able to minister to the unbelieving world through him as an obedient and submissive servant.

Jesus and the apostles in particular had ministries that were accompanied by signs and wonders to validate the truth of their teaching. God used signs and wonders to affirm His prophets in the Old Testament and continued their use in affirming the message of His apostles in the church.

Exodus 7:3 And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt.

Isaiah 8:18 Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.

Ezekiel 24:27 In that day shall thy mouth be opened to him which is escaped, and thou shalt speak, and be no more dumb: and thou shalt be a sign unto them; and they shall know that I am the LORD.

Acts 5:12 And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people....

1Corinthians 14:22 Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not....

He will again make use of signs and wonders as the time for the second coming of Jesus nears.

Acts 2:19-20 And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come....

Illyricum = area of today's Croatia, Bosnia, Yugoslavia, Albania

Rom. 15:20 Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation:

Rom. 15:21 But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.

Verse 21 seems to be another quote from Isaiah.

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 [understand].

Paul is a pioneer man. His desire was to take the gospel message to as many places as he could to reach the lost—places that had never even heard of Christ. He was not saying that it is wrong to build on the ministry started by someone else; he's just saying that his heart was to lay as many foundations as possible. The quote from Isaiah was precious to Paul's heart in that it declared the heart of God toward the Gentile nations, and he was eager to be the vessel used in sharing God's love with those nations.

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

Rom. 15:23 But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you;

Rom. 15:24 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*.

It is Paul's priority in getting the gospel message out to as many unbelieving Gentile nations as possible that has hindered him from coming to see the body of believers in Rome.

"these parts" – Most commentators agree that the letter to the Romans was written by Paul from Corinth. According to verse 23, Paul had almost completed his ministry in Corinth and was planning to head to Spain after a trip to Jerusalem (according to the verses that follow). On his way to Spain his plan was to stop off in Rome. According to scripture (Acts 24-28), we know that Paul was taken to Rome from Jerusalem as a prisoner. It seems that he never made it to Spain, at least in light of revealed scripture.

Rom. 15:25 But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.

Rom. 15:26 For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.

Rom. 15:27 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.

Paul was headed to Jerusalem to deliver financial contributions from the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. Evidently the church at Jerusalem was poor. They felt a responsibility to the church in Jerusalem, because that knew that they were indebted to that body of believers for being willing to send out the apostles to share the gospel with the rest of the world. They couldn't send a gift as precious as the gospel they received from the saints at Jerusalem, but they could at least help them financially to ease their material needs.

Macedonia – the area north of the Greek peninsula
Achaia – the area of southern Greece

Rom. 15:28 When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.

Rom. 15:29 And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

Paul is reiterating his priorities and wants to personally be the one to deliver this financial gift to the Jerusalem saints. After that, he will head to Rome. Paul seemed sure that he would see the saints in Rome and that the preaching of the gospel message would result in great blessing and glory to God in Rome. Paul was so right, but little did he know how circumstances would be much different than he envisioned.

That is really a wonderful and important truth to grasp. We are to be submissive and obedient to God's will for us with the realization that the expectation may differ greatly from the reality of what may be required of us in the process. God's way will always produce the greatest results—for His glory, for the benefit of the church and for the individual.

Rom. 15:30 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;

Rom. 15:31 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;

Rom. 15:32 That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed.

Paul closes his letter to the Romans with a prayer request. I thought it was interesting that he used the phrase "strive together with me in your prayers." Paul knew the power of prayer and the reality of the warfare the believer is constantly facing from the enemy and his forces. Although he is asking prayer for himself, he wants those prayers to be in the name of Jesus and according to what will honor Him and according to their love for Paul as a fruit of the Holy Spirit at work in their lives. It is also of note that prayer is to be directed to the Father. Paul's request is specific.

- He wants protection from the ones in Judea who have rejected Jesus; this is a prayer for physical safety.

- He wants the saints to accept the gift he has for them graciously. I think this stems from the fact that there was a strained relationship with the Jewish body of believers in Jerusalem and the Gentile bodies of believers elsewhere regarding what should be required of the Gentile believers regarding circumcision and other areas associated with Jewish religious practices.
- He wants to come to Rome with joy (a result of a mission successfully completed) and according to God's will.
- He wants to receive physical and spiritual refreshment while in Rome.

Rom. 15:33 Now the God of peace *be* with you all. Amen.

Paul closes his prayer with a blessing—That the God of peace be with you all. We know that God is with the body of believers at all times in the person of the Holy Spirit. But we all need reminded of that continually. I think *peace* is one of the most coveted blessings from the Lord. When we have our focus on God and have His peace in our hearts, we can face anything He allows to touch us, whether from the world or the enemy, because we are trusting in Him. Our confidence is in Him. Our security is in Him. Our strength is in Him. And HE NEVER FAILS.