

The Christian Manual: Study 19, Romans 15:1-22

Romans Studies for Teens by Mike Apodaca, MA



Begin with prayer for wisdom from God and for the presence of the Spirit.

Note: In a Bible Study, as much as possible ask the questions and let the students answer. Where they cannot, you supply the answer and keep everything flowing.

Introduction: What Part did Paul play in your salvation?

Bringing God Glory

Section 1: Romans 15:1-6 Our Part in Bringing God Glory

We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. ²Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up. ³For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me."⁴For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.

⁵May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, ⁶so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice who Paul saddles with the responsibility in the situation of the weaker brother—it's the stronger brother who has to accommodate the weaker. Again, listen carefully, Paul does not tell the weaker brother to shape up, to realize that God doesn't care about these things. It's the stronger, who knows that these cultural things don't matter, who has to change his behavior. He is the one who has to make allowances for his weaker brother.

So let's make this practical. Imagine you're a Christian who likes wearing hats. You even have a hat collection. But when you wear a hat to church someone tells you that it bothers them. Even though you know that God doesn't care, you are to stop wearing the hat for the sake of your weaker brother. This is what love looks like. Like Paul says, we are not here to please ourselves. We are here to build up others. If you need endurance or encouragement to make this happen, turn to God. He gives it in abundance.

The important thing is that we are unified, sharing the mind of Christ. Our unity is what glorifies God. It gives Him credibility with the people of our Oikos.

Section 2: Romans 15:7-13 Accept Others

⁷Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. ⁸For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, so that the promises made to the patriarchs might be confirmed⁹and, moreover, that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written:

"Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles;
I will sing the praises of your name."

¹⁰Again, it says,

"Rejoice, you Gentiles, with his people."

¹¹And again,

"Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles;
let all the peoples extol him."

¹²And again, Isaiah says,

"The Root of Jesse will spring up,
one who will arise to rule over the nations;
in him the Gentiles will hope."

¹³May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may

overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Our goal is to bring praise to God. Our means is accepting one another. Our motivation is that Jesus accepted us. Let's be real, if Jesus who is perfect and holy, was willing to accept sinful slobs like us, then it only makes sense that sinful slobs like us should accept other sinful slobs like us.

There were two great divisions in the church at the time of Paul's writing. On one side was the Jews and on the other, the Gentiles.

The Jewish people longed for their Messiah, promised to them from the days of their father, Abraham. Jesus came and fulfilled all these promises. For this, the Jewish people are to be forever thankful.

When we read the New Testament we see the trouble the Jews had with Jesus. He just didn't fit their model of a Messiah. Alfred Edersheim wrote: "In view of all this, what an almost incredible truth it must have been when the Lord Jesus Christ proclaimed it among Israel as the object of His coming and kingdom, not to make of the Gentiles Jews, but of both alike children of the Heavenly Father; not to rivet upon the heathen the yoke of the law, but to deliver from it Jew and Gentile, or rather to fulfill its demands for all! The most unexpected and unprepared-for revelation, from the Jewish point of view, was that of the breaking down of the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile, the taking away of the enmity of the Law, and the nailing it to the cross. There was nothing

analogous to it; not a hint of it to be found, either in the teaching or the spirit of the times. Quite the opposite. Assuredly, the most unlike thing to Christ were his times.”¹¹

Doug McDonald, a pastor friend of mine, put it this way recently, in comparing the Jewish view of God and Jesus:

Their God was moralistic – Jesus is merciful.

Their God forgave conditionally – Jesus unconditionally.

Their God was exclusive – Jesus is inclusive.

Their God needed sacrifice – Jesus sacrificed Himself for us.

Their God demanded service – Jesus came to serve us.

Their God was violent – Jesus is non-violent.

Their God was separate, holy and untouchable – Jesus is touchable and touching.

Their G_d was HaShem (The Name) and unspeakable – Jesus revealed Abba Father out loud.

Their God made demands with law – Jesus made disciples with love.

Their God was religious – Jesus (even as a Jew crossed religious lines regularly), and is not religious.

Doug McDonald, on Facebook 8/26/14

Those Jews who believed found in Jesus their Messiah.

Paul then shows that Jesus is the Savior to the Gentiles as well. This should not be a new concept to the Jews, nor is it Paul’s invention.

¹¹ *Sketches of Jewish Social Life In the Days of Christ*, pgs. 28-29, in *History and Christianity*, by John Warwick Montgomery.

He shows by several examples that this is what the Scripture (the Old Testament) clearly taught.

He concludes this section by calling God the God of hope. How appropriate! Jesus is the hope for the Jew and for the Gentile.

God bridged the greatest gap in history, that between the Jews and the Gentiles, in Christ. We should be able to bridge any of our differences in Him as well.

Paul again pairs peace and joy. This is not just putting up with others and being happy about it. This is supernatural unity based in the Spirit of God and joy that comes completely from God’s presence in us by the Holy Spirit and not at all from our circumstances. When we see this unity and joy alive within us, we can overflow with hope. These are evidence that we really do belong to God and that we have an inheritance with the saints.

Section 3: Romans 15:14-22 Paul’s Ministry

¹⁴I myself am convinced, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with knowledge and competent to instruct one another.¹⁵ Yet I have written you quite boldly on some points to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me ¹⁶to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles. He gave

me the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

¹⁷Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God. ¹⁸I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done— ¹⁹by the power of signs and wonders, through the power of the Spirit of God. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ.²⁰ It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation. ²¹Rather, as it is written:

“Those who were not told about him will see,
and those who have not heard will understand.”

²²This is why I have often been hindered from coming to you.

Paul believes the best of the Roman Christians. He trusts that the things he has written are not entirely new.

Paul is aware that he has been tough on the Romans. Telling the truth is often painful. It forces us to come to grips with things we would rather ignore.

God had called Paul to be the minister to the Gentiles for a purpose—to bring the Gentiles to God as a living sacrifice, a sacrifice made holy by the Holy Spirit.

We get in this passage a very personal look into Paul's thinking. He shows that he really doesn't care about anything except the mission that God has given him to bring in the Gentiles.

Especially important to Paul is the power of the signs and wonders that God has done through him to evidence the truth of his message. We have only to read the Book of Acts to see what mighty miracles God did through the Apostle Paul.

Paul tells us that he had not had the opportunity to visit Rome because he was fulfilling his mission to the Gentiles. It was his practice to go where others had not already been. Since he had established the Gospel throughout Asia Minor, it was time to move on. Some believe Paul had in mind to use Rome as a base of operations in his mission to Spain. This is why he wrote such a thorough explanation of his gospel, the most thorough one we have. In a sense, it was a job application.

We don't know for sure whether Paul ever made it to Spain. We know that when he came to Rome, it was in chains (see Acts 27-28).

The church in Rome was helpful to him in his imprisonment.

We must remember, Paul was set aside by the Holy Spirit for this mission (see Acts 13). This was his calling. God can call us at any time to a mission field. He may call us to professional ministry. He may call us to a particular Oikos group—to a new job, city, or family system (this happens when we marry). We simply need to be available at all times and willing to do what God wants us to do in His name.



WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

From all eternity God planned an amazing thing: To bring together the most separated of peoples, the Jews and the Gentiles, in Christ. When they came together, however, it was not always easy. Even though they had a common Savior, they did not always see eye-to-eye on cultural matters. This became a source of division among them.

Paul shows that God wants unity between all His children, and that it should be sought. He shows the Jews that Jesus is their Messiah, the one who fulfills all the promises of the Old Testament prophets. The Jewish Christians must see Jesus as the fulfillment of all their hopes and dreams. But Jesus is also the fulfillment of the hopes and dreams of the Gentiles. This is not a surprise. The Scriptures foretold that God would bring the Gentiles to Himself. This, however, was a very hard thing for the Jewish Christians to accept (we only need to read Acts 10 and the book of Galatians to see how hard).

God gave Paul the ministry to bring in the Gentiles. We can be thankful that He did, for this is why we are in Christ now. Had it not been for Paul's ministry evidenced by the powerful signs and wonders that God did through him, Christianity could have easily become a Jewish sect and left the Gentiles without hope. But, again, this was not God's plan. From eternity He strategized to bring in the Gentiles and to make them a holy offering by His own Holy Spirit within them. We are the fulfillment of that wondrous thought in the mind of God before creation was made. Praise to Him for calling Paul and for making a way for us into His glorious kingdom. Now we must be one with all the different types of people in His church.



CONNECT

Tonight we're going to see Paul's mission, his calling and the important part he played in the furtherance of the gospel and the bringing of people to Christ.

Paul didn't invent this mission. It wasn't his idea. The Holy Spirit called Paul during a prayer meeting.

Tonight we are going to pray for each other, asking God to lead each one into the calling that the Holy Spirit has for him or her. For some, God might be calling them to marriage. To others, God might be calling them to the mission field or to full-time Christian service. We will pray and listen for the voice of the Spirit. Hopefully, the Spirit will someday clearly speak to each one about their personal mission for Him.



WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Section 1 Romans 15:1-6

Strong help the weak, not because it is pleasant, but because this is what Jesus did for all of us when we were weak. He suffered all insults including death to redeem us. We can certainly return the favor and show ourselves like him, by doing the same for our brothers and sisters. When we do this, and experience real unity in the Spirit, God will be glorified.

Section 2 Romans 15:7-13

In both sides of this Jewish/Gentile conflict, Christ has been working. To the Jews He fulfilled their every longing, being the long-awaited Messiah, fulfilling all that was said of Him by the prophets. To the Gentile he became the Savior, fulfilling God's many prophecies concerning the Gentiles. Both Jew and Gentile share the same Savior. Both share the same Father through Him. Both share the same Holy Spirit. They have every important reason to be unified in Him.

Section 3 Romans 15:14-22

Here Paul discusses his mission to the Gentiles and his desire to visit the Romans and extend the gospel into Spain. Paul was set aside for this mission in Acts 13 and he has been focused and tireless in his accomplishment of it. Everything Paul is, with all the strength God has given him, with all the signs and wonders God performed through him, has gone into the fulfillment of this calling. We can be thankful for this faithfulness; for because of it the gospel has reached to us.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Section 1 Read Romans 15:1-6

1. What does Paul say is the motivation for the strong helping the weak?
2. Paul says that Christ did not please Himself. How much of our lives are spent pleasing ourselves? Has this become a habit of life, an expectation, that could get in the way of us living selflessly for Christ?
3. What is the end goal in our having patience with the weak among us?

Section 2 Read Romans 15:7-13

1. How should we act since Christ has accepted us? What happens when we follow this? Why is this important?
2. How has Jesus helped the Jews?
3. How has Jesus helped the Gentiles? Was this Paul's idea or God's plan all along?
4. What comes from trusting in God?

Section 3 Read Romans 15:14-22

1. What ministry did God give to Paul? Why is that important to us?
2. How is this a priestly duty? How are the Gentiles an offering?
3. What part in this does the Holy Spirit play?
4. What is the only thing that Paul wants to speak of? What kind of things did God do through Paul?
5. What is Paul's desire? What do you want to do for God?

HOW DOES IT APPLY?

God has called me to re-present Jesus to my world. This is a very high calling. It will mean giving up my self (my body, time, life, etc.) to God as a living sacrifice. It will mean daily being filled with the Spirit and experiencing the presence of God by worship, prayer, fellowship, and studying God's Word. But what could be more important? What could be more meaningful? What could be more satisfying than having a heart that yearns for God? To maintain my closeness with God, I need to only do things that Jesus would do. I have to put aside all sin and thinking about ways to satisfy myself. This life I live is not all about me, it is all about Him. Everything I do now, every choice I make, everything I do must be something He would do. My job, my possessions, my romantic relationships, etc. are all not under the Lordship of Christ.

God also calls me into a proper relationship with his other servants. This is a relationship of building them up in their faith. I'm never to think of myself as better than other Christians. I'm not to criticize them for whatever weaknesses they have in confusing cultural issues with spiritual ones. I am to love them and accommodate to their needs and not mine.

All this is basic Christianity—the baby steps. It is not glorious, not special. It is step one. When I live like this, fully sold out to God, I'm ready to be used by Him for bigger tasks. The Spirit might call me to the mission field, or to full-time ministry. He may give me a special task within my church family. Whatever He calls me to, I will do it single-mindedly, for Him and for His glory, that He might be known by more people. Then, I might hear, "Well done, my good and faithful servant."