

Abounding Grace Christian Church

A Study through the Epistle to the Romans – Part 40

I. Exposition of Chapter Fifteen (NOTE: The chapter division is unfortunate here. The first 13 verses continue the theme of the stronger and weaker Christians.)

A. Verses 1-2 – Bearing other’s Burdens.

1. Verse 1 – “We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not please ourselves.” – The word “bear” means; “to take up and hold, especially in the hands. To take up and bear, take up and bear away or take away.”¹

“This text implies that Christians should not grudgingly tolerate other Christians but should lovingly ‘care for’ and ‘work with’ each other.”²

a. The word “scruples” means, “weaknesses” and “incapable.”³

2. Verse 2 – “Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification.” - This is a simple, yet challenging call to put our neighbor first. (cf. **Philippians 2:3-4**) The word “edification” means, “building up”.

“Paul was not saying that we should be ‘people pleasers’ and do whatever anyone wants us to do simply because it will please them (cf. Gal. 1:10, 19; Eph. 6:6; Col. 3:22; 1 Thess. 2:4). The goal of our behavior should be the other person’s welfare and spiritual edification (cf. 1 Cor. 9:19-23). We should not please others rather than God, but we should please others rather than ourselves.”⁴

B. Verses 3-4 – Jesus our Example.

1. Verse 3 – “For even Christ did not please Himself...” - Jesus is the ultimate example of one who did not please Himself, but put others first. Paul writes more about this in **Philippians 2:5-11**.
2. “The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me.” – A quote from **Psalms 69:7**. The word “reproaches” means, “upbraiding” or “reviling”. It has the idea of false accusations, slander and abusive words. In other words, “He took upon himself, in His human person, the reproaches of men who hate God. In doing so, they vented against Him all their pent-up hatred of God and so cruelly mistreated Him.”⁵
3. Verse 4 – This is basically a defense given by Paul for the use of the Old Testament. He states that the Old Testament was written for our learning so that we might have hope through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures. In other words, the Word of God produces patience (perseverance) and comfort in us which brings us hope for the future. (cf. **I Corinthians 10:6**). The word “learning” here is the word commonly used for the word “doctrine” and the same word used in **II Timothy 3:16**.

C. Verses 5-6 - A Prayer for the Fulfillment of Paul’s Exhortations.

1. Verse 5 – “Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be likeminded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus.”

a. God is the source of “patience”. This word means, “to persevere, remain under. A bearing up under, endurance as to things or circumstances.”

1) Why “patience” or “perseverance” is vital for our lives:

a) Because we have an enemy who wants to stop us. **Ephesians 6:12; I Peter 5:8-9**.

b) It’s only through Perseverance that we will succeed. Perseverance brings **James 1:4**.

c) It’s only through Perseverance that we will be fruitful for God. **Luke 8:15**. “Fruitful” means; “to be fertile”; “produce”; “to bring forth a harvest”.

d) Perseverance is necessary for receiving the promises of God. **Hebrews 10:36**.

e) We are called to “run our race” with perseverance. **Hebrews 12:1**.

f) Perseverance is a necessary ingredient when trials come into our lives. **James 1:3**. (See also **I Peter 1:3-9; 4:12-14**.)

¹Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*, (AMG Publishers; Revised edition, 1993)

²Robert James Uley, *The Gospel according to Paul: Romans*, vol. Volume 5, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, 1998), Ro 15:1.

³Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*.

⁴Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Romans*, (<http://www.soniclight.com>: Sonic Light Publication, 2013)

⁵Picirilli, *Romans*, 300.

b. God is the source of “**comfort**”. The word “**comfort**” means, “**exhortation, encouragement and consoled.**”

1) Both the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit bring comfort to the believer. (cf. **John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7; I Corinthians 14:3**)

c. “**...to be likeminded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus.**” – This “**likemindedness**” would refer to the mentality that we will seek to please others over ourselves. It would also include humility (See **Philippians 2:1-8**).

2. **Verse 6** – “**That you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.**” Of course, oneness of speech requires oneness of thought. Being of one accord is only possible through the Word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit.

D. Verses 7-13 – The Mercy of God for the Gentiles.

1. **Verse 7**- Once again we see the exhortation to “**receive one another.**” (cf. **14:1**). Remember the meaning of the word “**receive**” is, “**to take beside**”; “**to draw to oneself**”; “**to lend a hand.**”⁶ An important emphasis is we’re to receive each other “**...as Christ also received us...**”. (cf. **14:3**). (NOTE: In the next few verses Paul shows that God has received both Jews and Gentiles.)

2. **Verse 8** – Christ ministered to and received the Jews on behalf of the truth, or to show the truthfulness of God in keeping His promises. Obviously, “**the circumcision**” is referring to the Jews.

3. **Verse 9** – God has also received the Gentiles because of His mercy. Of course, God’s mercy was also for the Jews but probably most of the Roman believers were Gentiles so Paul emphasizes God’s mercy toward them here.

4. **Verses 9-12** – Paul quotes a series of passages from the Old Testament showing that God has always planned to include the Gentiles in His plan of salvation.

5. **Verse 9** – Quote from **Psalm 18:49**. “**Denney says, ‘Christ is assumed to be the speaker, and we may say that He gives thanks to God among the Gentiles when the Gentiles give thanks to God through Him (Heb. 2:12).’**”⁷

6. **Verse 10** – Quote from **Deuteronomy 32:43**. Speaks of the Jew and Gentile rejoicing together over God’s mercy.

7. **Verse 11** – Quote from **Psalm 117:1**. Speaks directly of all heathen nations praising and glorifying God.

8. **Verse 12** – Quote from **Isaiah 11:1, 10**. Refers clearly to Gentile salvation by Christ, the “**root of Jesse**” (father of David).

9. **Verse 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.**” (NOTE: This is in the form of a prayer like verses 5-6).

a. “**God of hope...**” – Not only is He the “**God of patience and comfort**” but He’s also the God of hope. “**Hope**” basically means, “**to look forward with confidence to that which is good and beneficial**”⁸

1) In the New Testament “**hope**” often referred to the Second Coming when our salvation will be consummated. (**Galatians 5:5; Titus 2:13**).

2) There should be “**joy**” and “**peace**” when we’re “**believing**” the promises of God!

3) We are able to “**abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.**” (**14:17**)

“May the God of your hope so fill you with all joy and peace in believing [through the experience of your faith] that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound and be overflowing (bubbling over) with hope.”

Romans 14:13 – Amplified Bible

⁶Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 15.

⁷Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 246.

⁸Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 295.