

## **33. ROMANS SERIES: Christian Liberty 3**

### **Romans 15:1-13**

This passage begins with a summary statement of how the strong are to treat the weak. Their reaction should be founded in an attitude of love rather than any selfish reaction. The Lord Jesus Christ is set before us as the greatest example of selfless love and living, and His example is one that we ought to imitate, receiving one another without prejudice. In other words, Paul is seeking to instruct the Roman Church on how to live with one another as Christians, both weak and strong.

Please Read Romans 15:1-13

**NOTE: INDIVIDUAL DISCOVERY QUESTION HERE:** What is a scruple? Why are these things scruples?

**Verse 1:** Paul clearly identifies himself with the strong as he gives something of a concluding summary to the previous chapter's discussion. Those strong in faith who understand the full implications of Christ's death for daily living, are under obligation to think of others before themselves. The strong must not use their liberty in a selfish manner, by having no regard as to how the practice of their liberty might affect others. To have no regard for others is considered to be an abuse of Christian liberty.

Rather, the strong must bear, or meaningfully help their weak brethren to carry their weaknesses. We are to carry these as though they were our own (12:4,5,10; 1 Cor 9:20-23; 10:32-11:1; Gal 1:10; 6:1,2).

**Verse 2:** Rather than pleasing himself, the strong brother is to please his neighbour - in this case the weak brother. This is to be done by seeking good for him. That is, we are to seek to build them up spiritually in the common life we share (14:19; 2 Cor 10:8; Eph 4:12,29; Philip 2:3ff).

**QUESTION:** What will the instruction in verse 2 involve?

**Verse 3:** To further prove the place of selfless living, Christ Himself is held up before us as an example (2 Cor 8:9). Even Christ, who is God, lived in a selfless manner, as is proven through the Psalm 69:9 quote. He always sought to live according to His Father's will. Jesus endured reproach and insult because of His faithfulness to God, feeling as His own the reproaches directed at His Father. In order to bring glory to God, He was willing to suffer the insults.

Yet His mission among men also demonstrated selfless living, for He came to the place of men in order to save men, at great cost to Himself. The implication is that if Christ was willing to suffer selflessly, should not we also be willing to sacrifice self for the sake of our brethren.

**Verse 4:** This verse further explains that it is a right practice to use the Scriptures as a means for instruction, after all, that is why they were written (1 Cor 10:6,11; 1 Tim 3:16,17). The instruction intended is that of gaining a practical knowledge for living before God.

By applying ourselves to, and persevering in, the study of the Scriptures, we are encouraged, being strengthened and sustained through the trials of life, and thereby bringing ourselves assuredly to the possession of full salvation. Included in this instruction from the Scriptures is that regarding selfless living.

**Verse 5:** Paul here offers up a prayer to God, who is the Source of all patience and comfort in our lives, through the instrumentality of the Scriptures (15:4), that He might enable the strong to be selfless in their attitude toward the weak, as they learn from the example of Christ as portrayed in the Scriptures.

**Verse 6:** The reason is now given as to why we should follow Christ's example of selfless living and love. It is that both the strong and the weak may dwell together in unity, as one body, sharing a common life in Christ, to the glory of God. The focus will then be moved away from the scruples, to the other person in love.

**Verse 7:** The strong and the weak are to receive one another in an unreserved manner (14:1), in order to bring glory to God. This is to be done in the same manner that Christ received us. The context suggests that Paul has in mind once again, the Jews and the Gentiles as being received without despising one another. He has saved and accepted both Jew and Gentile, therefore both racial groups of believers are one in Christ - they are brethren in the Lord. Therefore we are to receive one another in like manner, in order to bring glory to God.

'This is why it is right that they should remain united together, and not despise one another, because Christ despised neither of them.'

John Calvin

**Verse 8:** Verses 8 through 12 are an expansion upon the thought of verse 7, as to how Christ despised neither Jew or Gentile in His receiving of them, and how He was selfless toward both. He writes firstly of the Jews, and how Christ came as a servant to them (Mk 10:45; Lk 22:27).

He came to the Jews in a manner of a servant for the truth of God. That is, to maintain the truth of God by fulfilling the promises made to them (Mt 10:5,6; 15:24; Jn 1:11), being faithful to His covenantal promises. Because of this the Gentiles are not to despise the Jews, for Christ went to them first, fulfilling the promises made to them.

**Verses 9-12:** In these verses Paul shows that God is not the God of the Jews only, but is also the God of the Gentiles. He extended His mercy to the Gentiles (Is 45:22; 52:10; Gen 12:3), not despising them, but leading them through mercy to glorify God.

Paul quotes a number of Old Testament passages, making up a small sample of the three sections of the Hebrew Bible (Ps 18:49; Deut 32:43; Ps 117:1; Is 11:10), showing again how the Gentiles were always intended to be part of the Kingdom of God, and therefore they ought not to be despised by the Jews, but received. It has always been God's plan to save both Jews and Gentiles, and therefore because He has always planned it so, and received both, they should likewise receive one another.

**Verse 13:** Paul again offers up a prayer to God on behalf of the Roman church. He prays to the God who is the Source of hope that the believers in Rome might be granted the blessings of being in Christ - that of joy, peace and abounding hope. It is the Spirit that enables the believer to experience the blessings of salvation.

## INDIVIDUAL DISCOVERY

Explain the idea expressed in Romans 15:27?

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