

Romans

15:1-7



To the Strong
and Then to All:
Bear With and
Receive One
Another as Christ
Received You to
Himself

¹And we, the strong, ought to bear the weaknesses of the ones without strength and not to please ourselves. ²Let each one of us please the neighbor for the good, toward building up. ³Indeed, even the Christ did not please himself, but just as it stands written: “The reviling of the ones who reviled you fell upon me.” ⁴For as much as was written previously was written for our teaching so that through the patient endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

⁵And may the God of patient endurance and of encouragement give to you the same mindset among one another in accord with Christ Jesus, ⁶so that with the same purpose you might with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁷Therefore, receive one another to yourselves, just as the Christ also received you to Himself to [the] glory of God.

Romans

15:1-7



*Introduction:
Yet, a
Continuation*

While 15:1 does mark a very slight change in Paul's argument the chapter break between 14:23 and 15:1 is poorly located. As we have seen in Romans, and for that matter, throughout Scripture, chapter breaks are disruptive and seemingly improperly placed.³ These "artificial" breaks can and do create confusion, especially when it's the case that some believe that each chapter is a new topic.

³In the original text of Holy Writ, there are no chapter or verse divisions. The chapter and verse division began in the 4th Century with an early manuscript called the Codex Vaticanus. The final chapter divisions took place in its final form in 1227 by Stephen Langton, the later Archbishop of Canterbury (so you can blame or thank an Englishman!).

Romans

15:1-7



**Introduction:
Yet, a
Continuation**

However, 15:1-7 actually wraps up Paul's discussion, introduced in 14:1, of the ongoing relevance of OT regulations for festivals, and particularly, foods. The issue of their (ir)relevance for the Christian life seems to have become particularly disruptive within and among the house-churches in Rome. Thus, 15:1-7 continues in the same vein as the previous section (14:13b-23) as it is also aimed most directly at the "*strong!*"

Romans

15:1-2



**Paul's Plea:
No Strong
Self-Pleasers
Please!**

¹And we, the strong, ought to bear the weaknesses of the ones without strength and not to please ourselves.

Paul continues to address those who now eat all foods and who no longer observe the Sabbath and other holy days (cf. 14:1-6). Also, for the first time, he characterizes these members of the house-churches as “*the strong*” (οἱ δυνατοί). The implication is of strength or power which give prominence and the possibility of dominating others. Hence the thought of greater responsibility, since, for Paul, the thought is not of physical strength, but the strength of superior knowledge and understanding of how God’s grace works (cf. 2 Cor. 12:10; 13:9).

Romans

15:1-2



*Paul's Plea:
No Strong
Self-Pleasers
Please!*

¹And *we*, the strong, ought to bear the weaknesses of the ones without strength and not to please ourselves.

Notice how Paul begins verse 1, “*we, the strong*” (ἡμεῖς οἱ δυνατοί) which reflects that Paul identifies himself with this group. This also explains by Paul now switches to the dominant use of the First Person Plural forms! How the strong will handle this recognition becomes a true mark of Christian maturity.

Romans

15:1-2



**Paul's Plea:
No Strong
Self-Pleasers
Please!**

¹And we, the strong, ought to bear the weaknesses of the ones without strength and not to please ourselves.

In regard to the weak, Paul speaks specifically of their conviction to continue to adhere to OT regulations regarding foods and festivals even though the Christ has come. Therefore, the strong are *“to bear the weaknesses of the ones without strength and not to please ourselves.”* In light of the verse that follows, it's likely that Paul means that bearing up when being judged (improperly) by the weak without striking back. The strong are able to do so because they are not seeking a place for themselves.

Romans

15:1-2



**Paul's Plea:
No Strong
Self-Pleasers
Please!**

²Let **each one** of us please the **neighbor** for the good, toward building up.

Paul's language now moves from his general form of address to the strong in the first person plural (v.1) toward an exhortation directed at "**each one**" individually. The content of his plea coincides with the language of Ch 13 &14. The reference to "**neighbor**" (τὸν πλησίον) is singular, which likely stems from Lev 19:18 as was cited in 13:9: "**you will love your neighbor as yourself.**" And we also get to the positive, loving, and active behavior in pleasing one's neighbor.

Romans

15:1-2



**Paul's Plea:
No Strong
Self-Pleasers
Please!**

²Let **each one** of us please the **neighbor for the good**, **toward building up**.

Note that you are to please your neighbor toward two specific ends:

(1) It is **“for the good.”** The ultimate **“good”** is eschatological salvation, but this phrase also includes everything else which would be for the good of the neighbor; and,

(2) **“toward building up.”** This term conveys an even stronger sense of goal.

Romans

15:3



*The Messiah
Who Willing
Bore All
Reviling*

³Indeed, even the Christ did not please himself, but just as it stands written: *“The reviling of the ones who reviled you fell upon me.”*

The best way to understand this verse is to allow our early Church Fathers explain for us. First, Origen:

“We must not please ourselves but rather assume the example of Christ, who alone died to sin...we do not have this example of living in ourselves, but we get it from Christ. Christ did not please Himself nor did He think it was robbery to be equal with God [Phil 2:6], but wanting to please men, that is, to save them, He suffered the reproaches of those who reproached God.”⁴

⁴Origen, *Romans* (Bray, *Romans*, ACCS NT 6:342, 354).

Romans

15:3



*The Messiah
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³Indeed, even the Christ did not please himself, but just as it stands written: *“The reviling of the ones who reviled you fell upon me.”*

John Chrysostom goes so far as to claim that: *“Paul always points to Christ’s self-sacrifice when he asks us to make sacrifices.”*⁵

However, Paul desires that our Lord Jesus, the Christ, be much more than just an example for us to imitate; His self-sacrifice reconciled us to God our Father and to one another (cf. 5:10; 14:3; 15:7) and furnishes us with the *“righteousness and peace and joy in [the] Holy Spirit”* (14:17) that enables us to sacrifice ourselves to please our neighbor!

⁵Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans*, 27 (Bray, *Romans*, ACCS NT 6:354).

Romans

15:3



*The Messiah
Who Willing
Bore All
Reviling*

³Indeed, even *the Christ* did not please himself, but just as it stands written: “*The reviling of the ones who reviled you fell upon me.*”

Paul’s use of a personal article before “*Christ*” (ὁ Χριστός) encompasses our Lord’s self-denial which, much to the chagrin of His disciples (e.g., St. Matthew 16:21-22; St. Mark 10:35-38 and St. Luke 9:44-46, 18:31-34), accomplishes our ultimate “*good*” and continues to edify His followers. In fact, you must know this: your Lord’s refusal to please Himself comprises his entire Messianic mission for your sake! This began with His Incarnation and extended (no pun intended) to His cross, where, on Good Friday His mission reaches its apex and culmination!

Romans

15:3



*The Messiah
Who Willing
Bore All
Reviling*

³Indeed, even *the Christ* did not please himself, but just as it stands written: “*The reviling of the ones who reviled you fell upon me.*”

With our Lord’s mission in mind, this is why Paul quotes from Ps 69:9 – “*The reviling of the ones who reviled you fell upon me.*” The proper translation is “*reviling*” (ὀνειδιζόντων) and “*reviled*” (ὀνειδισμός).

The uses of “*insults*” or “*reproaches*” (used by Origen) are too weak and unfamiliar. So the use of “*reviling*” conjures up the notions of vile spoken words and actions and fit very well with the same use in the Synoptic Gospels!

Romans

15:4-5



The Source of
Patient
Endurance,
Encouragement,
and Hope

⁴For *as much as was written previously was written* for our teaching so that through the patient endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. ⁵And may the God of patient endurance and of encouragement give to you the same mindset among one another in accord with Christ Jesus.

St. Paul begins verse 4, as he did in 1:2, by referring to “*as was written previously was written,*” though in different words, the content of the OT. He is reasserting the Christocentricity of the OT, a point that is heightened as Paul continues in vv.8-12. And why was the Scriptures “*written*” (ἔγραψεν – *this is a past tense, (Divine) passive, third person singular verb. The connotation is that the Scriptures were written by God, more specifically, via Divine inspiration!* “[F]or our teaching!” Teaching is a word that has great emphasis in the Pastoral Epistles (8 times in 1 Tim; 3 in 2 Tim; and 4 in Titus).

Romans

15:4-5



*The Source of
Patient
Endurance,
Encouragement,
and Hope*

4For as much as was written previously was written for our teaching so that through *the patient endurance and through the encouragement* of the Scriptures we might have hope. **5**And may the God of patient endurance and of encouragement give to you the same mindset among one another in accord with Christ Jesus.

After Paul explains the purpose of the Scriptures, he then lists two very important aspects of the teaching of Divine Scriptures. The Scriptures serves both as the source of and the means through which one receives *“the patient endurance and through the encouragement.”* So, when suffering, the Scriptures are given so as to empower you to patiently endure, literally, to remain under God’s declaration of righteousness with its resulting peace and access into His grace (cf. 5:1-2).

Romans

15:4-5



The Source of
Patient
Endurance,
Encouragement,
and Hope

⁴For as much as was written previously was written for our teaching **so that** through *the patient endurance and through the encouragement* of the Scriptures **we might have hope**. ⁵And may the God of patient endurance and of encouragement give to you the same mindset among one another in accord with Christ Jesus.

Likewise, one receives the encouragement from (of) the Scriptures (in the Greek this is a genitive of source), which then retrieves one of the gifts listed in 12:6-8: “*the one who encourages in the encouragement!*” This encouragement is your source of comfort and exhortation that no matter the reviling that you may endure; you will and do have hope (“**so that...we might have hope**”). St. Paul makes it quite clear that the Scriptures are the channel through which God, the actual source of “*patient endurance*” and “*encouragement,*” works in order to give you “**hope**” (ἐλπίδα - properly, expectation of what is sure and certain).

Romans

15:4-5



God, the
True
Source

⁵And **may** the God of patient endurance and of encouragement **give** to you the same mindset among one another in accord with Christ Jesus.

The key Greek word in this verse is actually obscured in the English. It's "*may...[He] give*" (δῶη) and it's in the Greek mood known as the optative. This is very important for you since it conveys the important reality of an "*obtainable wish or prayer!*"

Therefore, due to this, the sense of the whole verse is that it has a liturgical ring and suggests that St. Paul wrote with a view not only to winding up this section (from 14:1), but also that his letter be read to the congregations in Rome as they are gathered in Divine Worship!

Romans

15:5-6



The Result:
A Mindset
of Unity

⁵And may the God of patient endurance and of encouragement *give to you the same mindset* among one another in accord with Christ Jesus.

Paul's prayer that God "*give to you the same mindset*" may sound like he desires the house-churches in Rome to all think the same. Specifically, this would apply to the issues about which those in Rome have different convictions (14:1), namely, in regard to OT strictures about food and days. However, Paul's treatment of his subject throughout this section speaks strongly against this view.

Recall that Paul defines "*authentic love*" as "*having the same mindset toward one another*" (12:16). Here, the sense that not everyone will reach the same conviction regarding foods or days, but, rather, urges them to have the same attitude of Christian love toward or regarding one another. Therefore, the "*same mindset*" means the acceptance of one another, whether "weak" or "strong," rather than in the uniform agreement on the challenging issues of adiaphora.

Romans

15:5-6



*The Result:
A Mindset
of Unity*

⁵And may the God of patient endurance and of encouragement give to you the same mindset among one another in accord with Christ Jesus.

Paul, rather, pleads that their mindset should be *“in accord with Christ Jesus.”* Let’s read Phil 2:5! That directive incorporates setting one’s mind in accord with the will of Christ Jesus. But it more emphatically means a mindset which adheres to His example in the treatment of others, loving them; yes, even those who disagree with and even sin against you! Indeed, as Paul continues in Phil 2, Jesus humbled Himself to become a man and to die. That’s the mindset of a servant that Paul sets forth for you to imitate!

Romans

15:5-6



The Result:
A Mindset
of Unity

⁶so that with the same purpose you might **with one mouth** glorify **the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ**.

The reason for, and the result of, such a common mindset is for unity and concord. Thus, Paul is relating an underlying purpose which transcends differences. Paul clearly allows for the divergent view in regard to food and days; in fact, he insists that neither side pressure the other to conform to each respective position. The marvel remains that within the body of Christ, even with a diversity of practices regarding adiaphora, a unity permeates and prevails, as with the human body! Thus, the prepositional phrase “**with one mouth**” resonates nicely alongside a mindset that allows for and embraces the strongly held convictions present in Rome (and at Shepherd of the Springs!). It is “**with one mouth**” that “**God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ**” is glorified as Paul unites the eternal roles of God the Father and God the Son!

Romans

15:5-6



⁶so that with the same purpose you might **with one mouth** glorify **the God and Father** of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is noteworthy that Paul closes this verse with the full Christological title, “*of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ).

Here, Paul’s desire is that the hearers of this letter firmly know and believe that they do have a personal relationship with Jesus, the Christ, so that this bond might extend through our familiar (known) Lord Jesus toward one another.

The Result:
A Mindset
of Unity

Romans

15:7



Another Effective and Evangelical Hinge

⁷Therefore, **receive one another to yourselves**, just as the Christ also received **you** to Himself to [the] glory of God.

This “hinge” verse has three very important effective and evangelical purposes. *First*, it is a pivot verse in that it is the culmination of the previous section Romans 14:1–15:7. Paul’s use of “hinge” verses reminds us again of their “artificial nature,” and, at times, to a misleading assertion of the separation of chapters and verses. Paul’s intent is that his hearers in Rome know and consider each and every verse within its narrower and broader contexts.

Secondly, this verse depicts “responsive receiving.” The action that Paul is calling for is identical to Romans 14:1. He directs this to all in Rome, as signaled by the switch to the second person plural pronoun “*you*” (ὁμᾶς) and this is not a mere toleration of each other, but, rather, they are to actually “*receive one another*” in worship and with full fellowship, with all that that entails. They, again, are to imitate Christ, as He has received “*you!*”

Romans

15:7



Another
Effective
and
Evangelical
Hinge

⁷Therefore, receive one another to yourselves, just as the Christ also received you to Himself to [the] glory of God.

Third and last, is “to [the] glory of God.” We should be careful how this phrase is handled in regard to “*receiving one another*.” To be sure, our receiving of one another to ourselves does not resound to the glory of God in any way apart from Christ’s acceptance of us. His action always comes first in time and remains foremost in significance. But Paul’s thought does not end there. Instead and on that basis, he uses the present tense, second person plural imperative προσλαμβάνεσθε, “[you all] receive,” to implore the Roman believers (and each of you) to do the same for one another. Surely, this resounds “to [the] glory of God.”

Romans

14:1-15:7



Conclusion

The Lutheran Confession utilizes this section, 14:1–15:7, in order to show us how to handle issues that are not (or are no longer) commanded or forbidden by God’s Word. On the one hand, such practices cannot be put forth as a requirement for salvation, righteousness before God, or membership in Christ’s body. On the other hand, this section also teaches that human traditions should not be arbitrarily or carelessly discarded in a manner which harms the weak, that is, those who still view them as essential, even though they are not. Whatever the tradition under consideration might be, the Formula of Concord similarly advises *“in matter all frivolity and offenses are to be avoided, and particularly the weak in faith are to be spared.”*

[FC Ep X 5; also FC Ep X 3; FC SD X 9]

PEACE
IN CHRIST
JESUS

