

## **Romans 15 - The Weak and the Strong – Unity and Service**

“Romans: Great News from Rome to the Ends of the Earth”

14.1 ESV “not to quarrel over opinions” - NIV “disputable matters”  
- NEB “doubtful points”

3 Issues: 1. Diet 14.2 “One man's faith allows him to eat everything”

2. Days – 14.5 “One man considers one day more sacred than

3. Drink – 14.21 “it is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble”

14.14,17 “I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean...For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

Adiaphora: Literally: “no difference,” Matters not regarded as essential to faith, but nevertheless as permissible for Christians or allowed by the church.

Greek – DIAPHORA = Difference

Greek “A” prefix = Negation

Adiophora = NO Difference

15.1-2 Basic Exhortation: “We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.”

v. 2 Christians are God pleasers and people builders.

Fundamental Question: Not, am I free to do this? But: Will this build up my brother or sister for whom Christ died?

3-13 Two Gospel Explanations: Both begin with “For” v. 3 & 8

**Part 1** – vs. 3-6 Christ gave us MODEL of a Servant (Philippians 2.5-11)

**Teaching** vs. 3,4 “For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, “The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.” For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”

Psalm 69.9 If our Prince of Glory came to bear reproach of sinners, can't you bear the troubles of serving others? Are your rights so important?

**Prayer** vs. 5,6 “May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

PRAYER – Think of God and His mercy.

“I am convinced that the most important of all differences between people is precisely at this point, not whether they are intelligent or unintelligent, kind or unkind, joyful or taciturn, people-oriented or loners, but whether or not they will trust God. Christians by very definition are believers; non-Christians are unbelievers.”  
James Boice

**Result** vs. 6,7 “together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God”

Welcome leads to Worship  
Worship leads to Welcome

## **Part 2: Teaching** v. 8-12 / **Prayer** v. 13

8 For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, 9 and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, “Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name.”

10 And again it is said, “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.” Deuteronomy 32.43 - LAW

11 And again, “Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him.” Psalm 117.1 - WRITINGS

12 Again Isaiah says, “The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope.” Isaiah 11.10 – PROPHETS

Quotations show this is NOT God’s Plan B – Jew and Gentile as ONE was always God’s Design – Law / Prophets /Writings

If the weak behave like the strong, they fall into sin. The strong may refrain, just like the weak, and they will not sin. And, the neither will lose their liberty.

“The moment I need to exercise my liberty is the moment you lose your liberty”  
Because now you MUST do something – under compulsion, not liberty.

World = Might is Right  
Gospel = Might Supports the Weak  
He Ain’t Heavy, He’s My Brother!

Conscience not yet fully instructed by the Gospel becomes increasingly sensitive. Not enjoy the liberties of the gospel, indeed no liberties at all!

When one's conscience ensnares a person they enter a long and inextricable maze, not easy to get out of. When a man doubts if he can use linen for sheets, shirts, or handkerchiefs, soon he will be worried about hemp. Can he go without napkins and handkerchiefs? If he boogles at sweet wine, he will soon not even with clear conscience drink clean water. John Calvin Squabbling reflects a lack of Gospel understanding.

Strong Conscience in the Gospel sets a person Free!

Christians move at different speeds in their discovery of the Gospel and its power.

“There is a similar need for discernment today. We must not elevate non-essentials, especially the issues of custom and ceremony, to the level of the essential and make them tests of orthodoxy and conditions of fellowship. Nor must we marginalize fundamental theological and moral questions as if they were only cultural and of no great importance.” John Stott

v. 13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

HOPE thru v. 4 Scriptures // v. 13 Spirit

Peace, Joy, Hope > 5.1,2 “we have been justified by faith, **we have peace with God** through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and **we rejoice in hope** of the glory of God”

What we get individually in salvation we find corporately in the church.  
How can we not show patience and encouragement to ‘weak’ brothers when God has shown such patience and encouragement to us!

Welcome leads to Worship  
Worship leads to Welcome

Focus on Christ and the Gospel and all Adiaphora will fall into secondary unimportance.  
If Christ died for them, can we live for them?

15.14-33

**Praise** vs. 14,15 “I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another. But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God”

**Purpose** vs. 16-20 to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God. For I will not venture

to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ; and thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation.”

“Our hope is that... we can preach the gospel in the regions beyond you.” 2 Corinth 10.15,16

v. 23 “now there is no more place for me to work in these regions”

Paul was not Saturation Evangelist > was STRATEGIC EVANGELIST

“Paul’s strategy was to evangelize the populous and influential cities, and plant churches there, and then leave to others the radiation of the gospel into the surrounding villages.” John Stott

“We are but of yesterday, and we have filled every place among you – cities, islands, fortresses, towns, market-places, the very camp, tribes, companies, palace, senate, forum – we have left nothing to you but the temples of your gods” - Tertullian wrote to Unbeliever about the Church in Roman Empire in 200 AD

“The most numerous and successful missionaries of the Christian religion were not the regular teachers but Christians themselves, loyal and courageous...everyone who seriously confessed the faith proved of service to its propaganda...the great mission of Christianity was accomplished by means of informal missionaries” Adolph Harnack, German Church Historian

**Plans** v. 22. “This is why I have often been hindered from coming to you.”

v. 24 “Now, I am on my way to Jerusalem” from Corinth-SEA 800 miles

2) v. 23 Rome: “I have been longing for many years to see you, I plan to do so” 1,500 Sea miles

3) v. 28 “I will go to Spain and visit you on the way.” From Rome to Spain > 700 mile Sea

v. 23,24 “I have been longing for many years to see you. I hope to visit you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a while.”

**Problems** v. 30 “I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me.”

v. 31 “Pray that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea and that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints there”

Acts 21: The whole city was aroused, and the people came running from all directions. Seizing Paul, they dragged him from the temple... While they were trying to kill him, news reached the commander of the Roman troops that the whole city of Jerusalem was in an uproar... The commander came up and arrested him and ordered him to be bound with two chains. vs. 27-33

Preaching v. 20 “It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel”

v. 16 “duty of proclaiming the gospel of God”

v. 19 “I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ”

“When I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!”  
1 Corinthians 9.16

v. 29 “I know that when I come to you, I will come in the full measure of the blessing of Christ.”

John Calvin’s commentary on verse 29: “If we seek *salvation* it is by the very name of Jesus. If we seek *gifts of the Spirit* they will be found in His anointing. If we seek *strength*, it lies in his dominion; if *purity*, in his conception; if *gentleness*, it appears in his birth... If we seek *redemption* it lies in his passion; if *acquittal* in his condemnation; if *remission of the curse*, in his cross; if *satisfaction*, in his sacrifice; if *purification* in his blood... if *newness of life*, in his resurrection; if *immortality* in the same... In short, since rich store of every kind of good abounds in him, let us drink our fill from this fountain, and from no other.”

Poor v. 25 “I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the saints there.”

v. 26. For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.

Acts 2.44 All the believers were together and had everything in common.

v 27 they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spirit-ual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings.

v. 26 For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. They were pleased to do it

2 Corinthians 9.7 Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

“It is when we worship God, glorying in His name, that we are driven to proclaim his name to the world. And when through our witness people are brought to Christ, we then offer them to God. Further, they themselves join in his worship, until they go out and witness. They worship leads to witness, and witness to worship. It is a perpetual cycle.”  
John Stott