

Laboring for Unity

Introduction to Chapter 15

Believers are to receive one another, as Christ received the Gentiles—to God's glory. The first section of this chapter describes Christian relationships, with Christ as the perfect example of them. Paul's personal message to the Romans begins in Verse 14. Paul's ministry was to both those who were within (the Jews, those to whom were given the oracles of God) and to those who were without (the Gentiles). The work of unity in the body of Christ is the work of God.

We are to labor in receiving another with Christ as our example (vs. 1–12)

There are some differences (historical background)

There are many cultural and religious differences between the Jews and gentiles and with the opening of the Gospel to the gentiles there were a lot of hurdles to overcome. Paul admonishes the church adamantly, that we are to labor to receive the gentiles as God has already received them. The high standard and rule by which our conduct is measured is "as Christ also received us to the glory of God" (v. 7).

Being predominately Jewish, the early churches would feel "very Jewish" (a mixture of culture and conviction). There was an early expulsion from Rome of all Jews and it is only natural the cultural shift that took place in the Roman churches. Eventually, Jews began to return back to the city of Rome finding things different than when they had left. In order to not become divided, the early church had to labor together in overcoming their cultural differences by learning what things were "most needful" (Acts 15:28; Ephesians 4:3, 13).

There are universal principles

Christians are called to unselfish living (v. 1–2)

Romans chapter fifteen talks about living an unselfish life. Those that are strong are to help the weak. We are to not live to please ourselves but to please God, to put others before us. This chapter ends with Paul's missionary journeys.

The fifteenth chapter of Romans has a strong feeling of conclusion. As is Paul's style in this book, he repeats concepts already presented but more directly and personally. He prescribes the following instructions to his readers:

- The strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak.
- Please our neighbor to their good and edification.
- Bearing toward another the mind of Christ. That ye may with ONE mind and ONE mouth glorify God.
- Jesus is a minister to the Jew and Gentile.
- The Gentiles have reason to rejoice and are commanded to do so in the Scripture.

Christ is the Christian's example for living (v. 3)

Why should the Christian be concerned with others instead of himself? We should use Christ as our example, "For even Christ pleased not himself, His concern was for others demonstrated by his love, His teaching, and His healing."

The Word of God is the Christian's source of encouragement for living (v. 4)

We can be comforted in time of need by reading the Scriptures. We can also look forward in Hope.

Unity in the body of Christ is the goal of Christians (v. 5–6)

We should be united in one mind and spirit glorifying God who is our goal in life.

Christ is the standard by which Christians will be judged (v. 7)

God keeps His word and He is merciful (v. 8–12)

We are to labor in reaching those who are without (v. 13–21)

You are my brethren and filled with many good things (v. 13–14)

What was Paul's Opinion concerning the Christians at Rome?

- Paul believes God is going to cause them to abound in hope and power (v. 13)
- They were full of goodness.
- They were filled with all knowledge.
- They were able to admonish one another.

Although Paul had never been in Rome, he was aware and encouraged by their faith (1:8).

...Nevertheless (v. 15–21)

There are a lot of encouraging things Paul can say and has said (Romans 1:8), but we all have something to learn.

Paul wrote boldly (v. 15)

At the risk of sounding unappreciative of their example and faith, Paul as a faithful minister of the Gospel challenges the church boldly with necessary things.

Paul had a call and responsibility (v. 16a)

What does Paul refer to himself as? A minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. Preaching the Word in the power of the Spirit. With signs and wonders as the result. Paul's identity is wrapped up in His call. Paul Prioritizes his call and must delay personal desires and goals. It is not that he does not have a burden for his brethren, but that he has a call that takes precedent.

Paul had a goal (the offering up of the gentiles) (v. 16b)

Paul had an audience (God has given them to me) (v. 17–21)

As boldly as Paul is speaking, he is careful not to speak but of that which Christ has wrought by him:

- God has Used me mightily, but not all that God has done in this arena has he done using me.
- I'm not the only minister to the Gentiles.
- Careful: allow those healed to testify
- Careful so as not to hinder what God is doing elsewhere - Paul did not wish to build on another man's foundation (work).

- Here laborers have hindered.
- I Have a message for those who have not heard (God has promised it! v. 21; Isaiah 52:15; 65:1).

We are to labor in reaching those who are within (v. 22–33)

It is not for lack of love, but for a great cause I have been hindered (v. 22–24)

The phrase "these many times" shows how continually Roman Christians were on his mind and his desire. The phrase "a longing to come" shows that he had a tremendous desire to visit these people.

Paul's itinerary (v. 25–28)

Paul restates again his desire and intention to visit the church at Rome and his itinerary. He must first go to Spain and collect an offering for the saints at Jerusalem. He would then bring the offering to Jerusalem, after which he intends to visit Roman. How are the Christians in Macedonia and Achaia concerned for the poor among the Christians at Jerusalem? They contributed to the poor. Paul himself together with other brethren took this offering back to Jerusalem, to deliver in person What spiritual principal is Paul teaching the Romans by relating this news? It was an act of love on the part of the Gentile Saints. It was a fulfilling of our Lord's words in John 13:17, 35.

Conclusion

The Unity of the Trinity

In Verse 30 we once again see the trinity:

- For the Lord Jesus Christ's sake.
- For the love of the Spirit.
- Your prayers to God for me.

The benediction (v. 33)

"The God of peace be with you all," shows how the apostle's heart was fully at peace and fully in God's will! It also shows his overflowing love for the saints (twice in this chapter Paul **prays** for the church at Rome. See verses 13 and 33). The motive and power behind Christian unity is Christ's example of love and service and sacrifice. To have such harmony among Christians, we need to pray as Paul did for the Lord's enabling. Paul's sense of commission did not make him independent of his fellow Christians.