

# 118. The Book of Romans 15:1-13

*Paul's Epistle to the Romans*  
A message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier

(3-25-26)

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The first thirteen verses of Chapter 15 continue the subject of the previous chapter—dealing with matters of moral neutrality (what some have called 'grey areas'), things which God never said were wrong but left it up to each individual believer's conscience.

## Romans 15:1–2 (NKJV)

<sup>1</sup> **We then who are strong** ['mature and Spirit-filled'] **ought to bear with the scruples** ['weaknesses'] **of the weak, and not to please ourselves.** <sup>2</sup> **Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to [his] edification.**

Here Paul gets to the heart of the division among the Christians in Rome—selfishness! He tells them that Christian maturity isn't selfish, it doesn't demand its way or flaunts its liberty so that the weaker brethren are stumbled and feel condemned.

Christian maturity puts the feelings and the wellbeing of the weaker brethren first seeking only to edify them. In other words, Christian maturity is acting like Jesus—

## Romans 15:3 (NKJV)

<sup>3</sup> **For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me."**

Here Paul quoted Psalm 69:9 to prove his point—challenging his readers to 'take a couple of steps back' to get a clearer view of their sacrifices for weaker brothers and sisters in Christ.

He is basically telling them, "If you think you're making such a great sacrifice by giving up some food or drink—compare it to the sacrifice of Jesus for them (and of course us as well) on Calvary's Cross—no sacrifice in the world could ever match that!"

Now having said that, Paul isn't saying that Jesus never corrected those who were wrong and/or corrupt in their legalism.

J. Vernon McGee gives us the context of Psalm 69:9—

*"This is a verse which our Lord also quoted—in reference to the temple. In the temple the Lord found men who sold oxen, and sheep, and doves for offerings. He also found money changers there. He made a scourge of small cords and drove them all out. "And [He] said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house a house of merchandise. And his disciples remembered that it was written, 'The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up' (John 2:16–17). My, these men were religious and as busy as termites; in fact, they were doing just about as much damage as termites would. Oh, they were busy, but they were far from God."*

Another example would be how that Jesus was healing on the Sabbath and the Pharisees were outraged and began to reproach Him—*did He stop?*

No—He corrected their misunderstanding and then continued healing (Luke 14:1–4). But there were other times when Jesus laid aside His rights—

*“Does your Master pay the temple tax?”* the Pharisees asked Peter. *“Of course,”* Peter responded. But later on, Peter approached Jesus to ask Him about it—

**Matthew 17:25–27 (NIV)**

<sup>25</sup>...When Peter came into the house, Jesus was the first to speak. “What do you think, Simon?” he asked. “From whom do the kings of the earth collect duty and taxes—from their own children or from others?” <sup>26</sup> “From others,” Peter answered. “Then the children are exempt,” Jesus said to him. <sup>27</sup> “But so that we may not cause offense, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours.”

At this point you might be thinking, *“Now I’m confused—do I bear with someone’s weakness and immaturity in the faith and say nothing, or do I correct them for their own good and edification?”*

Well, say a quick prayer and do what the Holy Spirit tells you to do in the moment.

One pastor said it well,

“Sometimes, He will tell you to bear with those who are weak. Other times, He’ll tell you to love them enough to give them a word of correction—even if it means you will suffer reproach. Christianity is not rules, or regulations. It’s walking with the Lord moment by moment, saying constantly, *‘Lord, how do I deal with this situation? Is it a time for backing away and bearing weakness—or is it a time for loving exhortation and confrontation? What do I do?’*

It’s as though the Lord gives us broad principles in the Word and then says, *‘See Me for further instructions. Talk to Me about specific application.’* James reminds us, *‘If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.’* (James 1:5).”

**Romans 15:4 (NKJV)**

**<sup>4</sup> For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.**

In saying this, Paul is telling us that giving up our rights for the sake of others to bless them rather than ourselves is nothing new.

The Old Testament Scriptures are filled with examples of men who laid aside their liberty and rights for the sake of their weaker brothers:

- *Abraham* (Genesis 13:8, 9),
- *Jonathan* (1 Samuel 19:4),
- *David* (1 Samuel 24:10), and
- *Moses* (Hebrews 11:24)

They are all examples of men who willingly let go of their rightful possessions or positions. They didn’t demand their own way, and they prospered as a result—

**Romans 15:4 (NLT)**

**Such things were written in the Scriptures long ago to teach us. And the Scriptures give us hope and encouragement as we wait patiently for God's promises to be fulfilled.**

So, "Learn from their example," said Paul.

But to learn and benefit from their examples (as well as others)—we need to know the Old Testament!

A lot of Christians don't read the Old Testament because well, it's "OLD"! They think it's the 'outdated testament' and therefore the 'irrelevant testament'—but nothing could be farther from the truth.

One pastor said this on the subject—

*"I frequently receive letters from folk who say, "I didn't know the Old Testament was so practical," or, "I had not realized that the Old Testament had such meaning for us today. I did not know it spoke of Christ as it does." Paul here says that it was written for "our learning."  
In my opinion, the greatest sin in the church of Jesus Christ in this generation is ignorance of the Word of God." The Word of God imparts patience, comfort, and hope. You won't find any hope in the daily newspaper. You won't find any hope in modern literature. Look at any field and see if you can find any hope. There is none whatsoever. It is dark and dismal when you look out at this world today. My friend, the only place you can find real hope is in the Word of God."*

**Romans 15:5–6 (NKJV)**

**<sup>5</sup> Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Warren Wiersbe—

*"A person's spiritual maturity is revealed by his willingness to give up his rights that others might be helped. He does this, not as a burden, but as a blessing. Just as loving parents make sacrifices for their children, so the mature believer sacrifices to help younger Christians grow in the faith."*

Then Paul went on to share 2 sources of spiritual power that we must use if we're going to grow strong and mature in our own Christian life so as to have the patience and kindness we need to bear with the spiritual immaturity of weaker believers in the church—

The **Word of God** (Romans 15:4); and **prayer** (Romans 15:5-6).

Again, Wiersbe comments—

*"We must confess that we sometimes get impatient with younger Christians, just as parents become impatient with their children. But the Word of God can give us the "patience and encouragement" that we need. Paul closed this section praying for his readers, that they might experience from God that spiritual unity that He alone can give."*

As we study the early church in the Book of Acts, we can see that the first time the church was threatened with serious division was when the Apostles got so busy with the church 'food pantry' ministry and had to forsake what they were called to do (read Acts 6:1-6):

**Acts 6:7 (NKJV)**

**<sup>7</sup> Then** the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

This suggests to us that the local church must major on the Word of God and prayer if it is going to prosper spiritually, be strong and unified and be successful in the work God has called us to do.

Paul began Romans 15 verse 5 by saying, “**Now may the God of patience...**”

There are times I marvel at the patience of God and how He has restrained His judgment from being poured out and hasn't wiped out this wicked world yet. God's patience has caused many Christians to begin to wonder if He is ever going to judge this world for its evil.

Peter even mentions this in his second epistle Chapter 3 verse 9—

**2 Peter 3:9 (NKJV)**

<sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. (Comment)

But James assures us that our 'job' is to be patient—

**James 5:7–8 (NLT)**

<sup>7</sup> Dear brothers and sisters, be patient as you wait for the Lord's return. Consider the farmers who patiently wait for the rains in the fall and in the spring. They eagerly look for the valuable harvest to ripen. <sup>8</sup> You, too, must be patient. Take courage, for the coming of the Lord is near.

Yet Peter prophesied that in the last days—

**2 Peter 3:3–7 (NKJV)**

<sup>3</sup> ...scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, <sup>4</sup> and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of creation.” <sup>5</sup> For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, <sup>6</sup> by which the world *that* then existed perished, being flooded with water. <sup>7</sup> But the heavens and the earth *which* are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

But in the meantime, Paul tells his readers, unity among God's people is critical if we're going accomplish the work He has commissioned us to do before He comes for His Church—

**Romans 15:7 (NKJV)**

<sup>7</sup> **Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.**

The whole Christian life is about God's glory not about whether or not we're right about non-essential doctrines like '*diets and days*.' Paul's point is, can't we as Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus come together in these last days for the sake of unity and the glory of God?

Therefore, Paul admonished us (in verses 5 and 6) to put aside our petty differences and “**be like-minded toward one another...and with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ?**”

In other words, instead of letting these issues about non-essential things divide Christians (especially making a division between Jew and Gentile believers), we should receive one another just as Christ received us—faults and all!

Charles Spurgeon—

*“Christ did not receive us because we were perfect, because he could see no fault in us, or because he hoped to gain somewhat at our hands. Ah, no! But, in loving condescension covering our faults, and seeking our good, he welcomed us to his heart; so, in the same way, and with the same purpose, let us receive one another.”*

Bottom line: Receive one another; edify one another; and please one another—all to the glory of God!

Augustine said, *“On essentials—unity; on non-essentials—liberty; in all things—charity.”*

**Romans 15:8–12 (NKJV)**

**<sup>8</sup> Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision [the Jews] for the truth of God, to confirm the promises *made* to the fathers, <sup>9</sup> and that the Gentiles might glorify God for *His* mercy, as it is written** [Paul quotes a series of passages from the Old Testament demonstrating that God always intended that the Gentiles would be included in the Kingdom of God and praise Him]:

***“For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, And sing to Your name.”*** <sup>10</sup> And again he says: ***“Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!”*** <sup>11</sup> And again: ***“Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!”*** <sup>12</sup> And again, Isaiah says: ***“There shall be a root of Jesse [Messiah]; And He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, In Him the Gentiles shall hope.”***

*“Instead of dividing over disputable matters, Jews and Gentiles should unite in Jesus over the common ground of praise.”*

**It is true that nothing unites believers in Jesus like praise!**

The statement **“I will confess to You among the Gentiles”** comes from Psalm 18 (a Messianic psalm) and describes Jesus Himself giving praise among the Gentiles.

Then Paul ends this section of Romans (12:1-15:13) where he has been focusing on believers applying everything he taught in the previous 11 chapters on doctrine—with a beautiful prayer for the saints in Rome—

**Romans 15:13 (NKJV)**

**<sup>13</sup> 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.**

Many people don’t realize just how important hope is for living a normal, healthy, productive life—

One pastor said,

*“Hope is one of the intangibles of life that can’t be measured out or weighed on a scale the way you would food or some other commodity that is essential for our physical well-being—and yet hope is no less essential for life.”*

I read this article a number of years ago that helps to underscore the power of hope—

*“A study was done on rats in Norway that lived on the wharfs by the sea. After being thrown into the open water, one group paddled for about three and a half minutes before giving up and drowning. A second group was thrown in but plucked out right before they drowned. The next day, when the rats were thrown back into the water, scientists were astounded to find them able to tread water for forty-five minutes or more—evidently because they had hope they would be rescued as they had been the day before.”*

Hope is one of the things that makes life possible—we can't live without. But when it is present and 'alive' in our hearts—it's amazing the obstacles we can overcome and the things we can accomplish!

Several years ago, I came across the story of a self-made millionaire named Eugene Lang. Mr. Lang powerfully changed the lives of the sixth-grade class in East Harlem, New York.

One author recounts the story—

*“Mr. Lang had been asked to speak to a class of 59 sixth graders. What could he say to inspire these students, most of whom would drop out of school? He wondered how he could get these tough and poor children even to look at him. Scrapping his notes, he decided to speak to them from his heart. ‘Stay in school,’ he admonished, ‘and if you do, I’ll help pay the college tuition for every one of you.’ At that moment the lives of these students changed. For the first time they had hope. Said one student, ‘I had something to look forward to, something waiting for me. It was a golden feeling.’ Nearly 90 percent of that class graduated high school and went on to college.”*

English author, poet and essayist Samuel Johnson wrote in his work, *The Rambler*—

*“The natural flights of the human mind are not from pleasure to pleasure, but from hope to hope.”*

In other words, most people think that we make it from day to day through *pleasurable* experiences when it isn't pleasure that keeps us going from one day to the next—it's **hope**.

How do I know that, because there have been more than a few millionaires (and some billionaires) that have committed suicide—not from lack of pleasure but from the absence of hope.

**Proverbs 13:12 (NKJV)**

<sup>12</sup> Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but *when* the desire comes [when a hope is realized], *it is* a tree of life.

Or in other words, when we're deprived of hope, we become emotionally sick and that will lead to depression and in some cases suicide—but hope...

Webster's dictionary defines **hope** this way—*“To desire with expectation of obtainment.”*

Humanly speaking just because we hope for something doesn't mean it's guaranteed—unless it's hope rooted in a promise of God—

**Romans 15:4 (NLT)**

<sup>4</sup> **Such things were written in the Scriptures long ago to teach us. And the Scriptures give us hope and encouragement as we wait patiently for God's promises to be fulfilled.**

In the Bible God has given His children many promises—all of which are designed to give us hope.

Peter called these *“exceedingly great and precious promises.”* (2 Peter 1:4)

Many of these deal with everyday life, where God has promised to provide everything we need to live physically from day to day.

**Matthew 6:31-33 (NLT)**

<sup>31</sup> “So don't worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’ <sup>32</sup> These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. <sup>33</sup> Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

**Philippians 4:19 (NKJV)**

<sup>19</sup> And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

God, who created us, knows how important hope is for living our lives here on earth—and how prone we are to lose it when things get tough—which is why, in His Word, He constantly tries to encourage us not to lose hope in Him and in His promises to us—

**Jeremiah 29:11 (NLT)**

<sup>11</sup> For I know the plans I have for you," says the LORD. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.

But we have to believe that by faith!

God wants His people to have hope because He knows it is an essential ingredient for life—He knows that when hope is gone life becomes impossible.

David expressed the importance of hope when he faced a life-threatening crisis, he said,

*"I would have lost heart, unless I had believed [had hope] that I would see the goodness of the Lord In the land of the living."* (Psalm 27:13)

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