

Romans 15:1-29

We are working our way through the end of the book of Romans here and next week Lord willing we will complete our study through this glorious letter that Paul wrote.

As we continue today we are going to be building on the principles that we explored last week and I wanted to take just a few minutes to refresh you about what Paul has been saying.

If you remember Paul was telling the church that they needed to seek after unity and mutual edification with each other even when they may not see things the same way. In the church in Rome there were both Gentiles and Jews and both of these groups had some very different ideas about how they should properly live for Christ.

Paul gave two primary examples that illustrated the differences. The first was what foods could and could not be eaten and the second was what day of the week the Lord should be worshipped.

Both of these topics were what Paul classified as disputable matters...What that means is that these were not issues that pertained to salvation and doctrine but instead to how an individual personally believed they should serve the Lord Jesus.

You and I run into many issues that are similar in nature as we go through life as well. Some of these may be as simple as what kind of clothing should be worn when attending church or perhaps whether or not an individual should have tattoos or even whether someone should drink alcohol or not. The truth is we can see things differently. And what we need to do is what Paul instructed us and

that is to be willing to accept someone that may think differently than we do.

We should be willing to lay down our freedoms in order to bless a brother or sister...AND those who may not have a freedom to do something should not pass judgment on those that do have a freedom. It goes both ways in the Christian life.

Our tendency as humans is to judge one another, to think that we somehow have it together more than someone else does or that we know more than the person next to us.

I love it that as Paul discussed this with the believers in Rome that he essentially removed himself from the equation, and I want to just share a few verses with you from chapter 14 of Romans if you listen first to verse 4 which says this ⁴Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

Verse 8 then says this ⁸For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

Verses 12-13 say this ¹²So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. ¹³Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way.

And then finally listen to verse 19 which says this ¹⁹Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.

As you and I live our lives as believers in Christ we should always be looking for unity, we should be looking to edify and build each other up, we should be looking to bless our brothers and sisters.

Let's continue on here this morning and see how things develop if you look at verses 1-2 of chapter 15 where Paul says this **We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves.** ² **Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification.**

As you and I go through life, if we happen to find ourselves in a position of having a particular freedom about something we should be willing to lay that down in order to bless those who might have a weaker position.

The underlying current to this section of scripture is that we are going to choose not to live for ourselves. **Let's face it...** You and I are very good at pleasing ourselves, we can be very quick to have the attitude that says I'm going to live for what I want.

Paul is working against that and really the whole Christian mentality works against that. Paul back in Romans 13 said we were to owe no one anything except to love one another. Over and over again the theme of these chapters is to live with others in mind as you seek to serve the Lord.

Paul had this to say over in 1 Corinthians 10:31-33 when he said ³¹ **Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.** ³² **Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God,** ³³ **just as I also please all men in**

all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

I have to ask you today if you stepped outside of your life and observed yourself would you find yourself edifying and building others up? Or would you find yourself being critical of others and how they may see something differently than you do? Are you giving people space to grow in Christ? Are you pointing to people to Jesus and teaching others to rely on the leading of the Holy Spirit in their lives or are you pushing religious observation and the keeping of rules on them.

I think that one of the things missing in the church today is the constant reminder that we must learn to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit in our lives, that we need to learn to be attached to Jesus and allow Him to lead our lives. Sometimes the best advice we can give to people especially when it comes to disputable matters is to simply say “pray about it, ask the Lord what He has for your life.” This teaches us to embrace that God speaks to us and guides us each individually as we go through life.

Now I will remind you that the Holy Spirit is never going to go against His Word. If you want to know God and His heart then read the Word, read the Word and read the Word some more and you’ll discover God’s heart on so many issues that you and I face.

Let’s continue on here if you look at verse 3 which says this **3 For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, “The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me.”** Now Paul points to the ultimate example of living with others in mind and of course it is Jesus. We might remember that Jesus chose to lay down His life and His

desires in order to save all of humanity. **Jesus chose to submit to the Father's will not for His own benefit but that you and I might be saved.**

We might ask ourselves were there a time in the life of Jesus that He had freedom to do something and yet for the benefit of others Jesus laid down His right? Surely there are many examples but I wanted to share what we find over in Matthew 17:24-27 and it says the following

24 When they had come to Capernaum, those who received the temple tax came to Peter and said, “Does your Teacher not pay the temple tax?”

25 He said, “Yes.”

And when he had come into the house, Jesus anticipated him, saying, “What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons or from strangers?”

26 Peter said to Him, “From strangers.”

Jesus said to him, “Then the sons are free. 27 Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you.”

We can see here that Jesus knew He didn't need to pay the temple tax and yet for the benefit of others and especially Peter He chose to pay it.

Look with me at verse 4 which says this **4 For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.** The word of God should be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. The Word is the standard that we build our lives upon.

As you and I are in the Word we find that there is a great comfort that is found in our lives and a great patience as we learn to navigate through the difficulties of life.

We can certainly learn from the characters of the Bible about patience can't we? We might think of Joseph as he endured years of suffering, we might think of Job and how he lost it all, we might think of the Israelites as they were in captivity in Babylon and how all of these individuals eventually saw the comfort of God as they patiently endured the trials that came upon them. Certainly in the New Testament we learn an awful lot from Jesus about patience.

We also see the incredible comfort of God throughout the scriptures. How many times did God rescue His people when they had failed and gone the wrong way? How many times did God show up and destroy the enemies of the people of God? From a New Testament position we can see that God comforted the saints as they endured persecution.

The Word of God is what sets us on the right path as we go through life.

In this world you and I have the blessing of simply being able to lay down our lives just as Jesus did for us that others might be ministered to. You and I can bear with those who might be weak in a particular situation. We can put others first as we stay near to the Lord. We can't do something like that in our own strength...IT will have to be as the Lord has changed us greatly and we have watched and learned from our Savior and His example and as we study the scriptures.

Look with me at verses 5-6 which say this ⁵**Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus,** ⁶**that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

This is almost like a prayer from Paul. His desire in all of this that he has said over the last several chapters is that we might be like-minded toward each other. Paul wants us to have unity.

I've said this before but it is amazing to me how Jesus brings people together. Listen to what Paul had to say over in Galatians 3:28 which says this ²⁸**There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.**

You know I am thankful that for the most part we have a great unity here at our church. I suppose when you think about it one of the greatest causes for division in any church is because we become entrenched in our views, we can start to hold on tightly to our own convictions and when people don't think like we do our flesh will want us to divide and avoid those around us.

As I said, Paul is really praying for this church as he is exhorting them and his desire and really the desire of any church should be to glorify God not only in our minds but in our hearts as well. **The goal of any church should be how can we magnify or make larger the name of Jesus.**

If you and I are constantly arguing over disputable matters what is the world going to think?

All right let's move forward here if you look with me at verse 7 which says this ⁷**Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.** Paul instructs us to receive one another and as we do so that we should do it just as Christ has received us.

We should ask how was it that Christ received me? I think of what the Word says over in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 which says this ⁹**Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, ¹⁰nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.**

I'm always amazed that Jesus received us when we were no where near what we should be in life. Jesus accepted us when we were down and out, when we had no hope and often times when we were dead set against anything that He desired for our lives.

Earlier in the book of Romans in chapter 5:6-8 Paul said this ⁶**For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. ⁸But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

If Jesus can receive us in such an incredible way we also ought to be willing to bear with the differences that we find between each other especially when it comes to disputable matters.

I believe it can be hard to receive a brother or sister in Christ if we can't first understand the love that Jesus has displayed towards us. If you can't see how much Jesus has done in your own life personally you won't be able to extend that mercy and love to others.

Now Paul as he moves forward here in our text is going to continue to talk about the Jews and the Gentiles and their oneness in Christ if you look with me at verse 8 we'll talk about the Jewish people for a minute it says this **8 Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers,**

Paul has talked extensively about the Jews and God's great work in them as a people group and we especially saw that in Romans 9-11. Paul has made it clear that the Jewish people were blessed and that to them were given the oracles and the covenants of God, the adoption as God's people, the glory of the presence of God as seen in the book of Exodus and even the service of God that they were able to enter into.

The biggest blessing though is that the Jewish people were the people group that the Messiah came through. The prophets of old had spoken often of the coming of the Lord and we might remember that Jesus fulfilled over 300 prophecies that spoke of all kinds of details about Him such as where He would be born, that He would be born of a virgin, that He would come on a specific day and even how He would die on the cross.

Jesus came for the Jewish people and then Paul brings in the Gentiles and points out that they also are part of God's plan of redemption.

Look at verses 9-12 which say the following ⁹and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written:

“For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, And sing to Your name.”

10 And again he says:

“Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!”

11 And again:

“Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles!

Laud Him, all you peoples!”

12 And again, Isaiah says:

“There shall be a root of Jesse;

And He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles,

In Him the Gentiles shall hope.”

What I want you to catch here is that Paul is using the Old Testament scriptures to point out that God had the Gentiles in mind as being a part of those that would worship and honor Him. The Jewish people in particular had a hard time accepting that Gentiles could be saved. The cultural thought of the day was often that the Gentiles didn't have the opportunity to be right with God and some even said the Gentiles were just food for the fires of hell.

God though was clear that the Gentiles would be His as well. You might notice that these 4 references that are given here are given from the law, the prophets and the Psalms so it covered numerous sections of scripture.

The first reference in verse 9 is taken from Psalm 18:49 and I want you to just notice that in this particular verse the Lord is saying that the Jewish people would give thanks to the Lord among the Gentiles...In other words as the Jewish people gave thanks the Gentiles would hear of the awesome God who was over all. If you remember the Jewish people were supposed to be a light to all of the world.

The second reference in verse 10 is taken from Deuteronomy 32:43 and in this verse you can see that not only would the Gentiles hear of the God of the Jewish people but they would rejoice WITH them...meaning they are joining in on the worship and adoration of God.

The third reference in verse 11 is taken from Psalm 117:11 and this time the idea is that the Gentiles will independently praise the Lord and that all peoples will praise Him.

And then the final reference found in verse 12 is found over in Isaiah 11:1 and 10 and the idea is that the Gentiles would find hope in the Messiah just as the Jewish people had.

Look with me at verse 13 of Romans 15 which says this ¹³**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.**

As you and I believe, as the Jewish people believe as we come together in Christ as we lay down our lives for each other we will discover that our great God will fill us with hope, joy and peace. I just love it that simple faith in Jesus Christ produces so many benefits in our lives.

And notice that the Holy Spirit is brought into the conversation as well...We are told here that we will abound in hope by what? By the power of the Holy Spirit.

I have to ask you today have you recognized that the Holy Spirit lives inside of you? Are you regularly being filled with God's power and relying on His strength? Or do you live life in your own abilities?

We must learn to be empowered by the Spirit of God **and listen if you haven't ever recognized that God's Spirit lives in you** I just encourage you after the service to come forward **and we can ask God together that He would make His presence and power known** to you as we simply ask the Holy Spirit to do a work in your life.

Look at verse 14 which says **14 Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.** Paul was certain in his own heart when he thought about the church in Rome **that because of what Christ had done in them that** they in turn would be full of goodness **and they were filled with knowledge and that** they were fully capable of admonishing each other.

Perhaps Paul felt he had spoken a little forcefully to the church in Rome about what we have seen in the past few chapters...**and so here he simply says that he is confident about them.**

Paul had an optimism in his life that this church was going to be able to not only apply the things he had discussed but that they would also flourish in them.

You know I think the same way about our church. I'm not saying I'm Paul or anything but I can see in our own church that we are able to minister properly to each other, we have a love and concern for each other, we have knowledge and maturity when it comes to the truth...and so I like Paul would say I am confident concerning you.

I suppose I would say any church is a lot like the church in Rome in that each of us are in very different places in our walks with Christ. Some of us are a lot further down the road with Jesus as we have known the Lord for quite some time...Others who are here and a part of this church may just be at the start of their walk with the Lord...At the end of the day we must work to push each other forward in our walk with Christ.

A church that is all caught up in the disputable things of Christianity is not going to be very unified...A church that is focused on self instead of Christ is not going to be very powerful in the Spirit...Only those churches that have the Word of God, the work of Christ and the empowering of the Holy Spirit will truly be able to minister to one another.

Look at verses 15-16 which say ¹⁵Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on some points, as reminding you, because of the grace given to me by God, ¹⁶that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

While Paul was fully confident that the church in Rome could admonish and minister to each other Paul also knew that he had a calling in his life that he had to fulfill.

I think Paul's heart here is to let this church know that he wasn't looking to come in and drop some heavy knowledge or to come across like he knew more than others...the simple truth was that Paul had a calling as an apostle and he intended to fulfill it.

I think we all have a calling in life don't we? We've already talked about this but each of us have very specific callings and gifts within the body of Christ and we should look to fulfill those to the best of our ability. For myself I am called to teach the Word of God and to do so to the best of my ability...I am fully aware that much of what I say each Sunday may already be known and yet God has made it His ambition to call some to go over the scriptures with others making it as simple as they can to understand.

Paul took his calling very seriously as should you and I and for Paul he knew that he was called to minister to the Gentiles. We have that calling spoken of in Galatians 2:7-9 which says ⁷But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter ⁸(for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), ⁹and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

You will notice in this section of Romans that Paul makes it clear that the work that was done wasn't in his power or ability but instead the Holy Spirit is given the credit as He sanctified or set apart those that came to faith.

Veres 17-19 say ¹⁷Therefore I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus in the things which pertain to God. ¹⁸For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient— ¹⁹in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. Paul as he writes I believe was reminded of how incredible the work of God had been through his life as he openly declares I am not going to glory in anything except that which Christ has done.

And then he speaks of the mighty signs and wonders that were done by the power of the Holy Spirit and that he had been given the incredible opportunity to preach the Gospel from Jerusalem all the way to Illyricum which is in the area of modern day Albania near Italy.

It's amazing really if you read through the book of Acts and you just take note of all the times the Lord used Paul and all the miracles and signs that were done through him. Paul had the privilege of seeing the Holy Spirit rebuke demons out of people's lives...at one point we are told that even the handkerchief of Paul was taken and placed upon people and they were healed. Paul had seen the Lord deliver him from prison, he had seen God open and even close doors as he desired to go from place to place.

At one point Paul at the end of the book of Acts had been bitten by a poisonous snake and the people of the island of Malta were watching to see if he would fall over dead...Instead Paul simply shook the snake off and walked away with no harm coming to him.

Paul as he remembers all the Lord had allowed him to participate in simply gloried in Jesus Christ. May that be you and I as we go through life. May we glory in Jesus and not in ourselves...may we learn to look for not a shred of recognition but instead that Christ would be magnified.

Look at verses 20-21 which say this ²⁰And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation, ²¹but as it is written:

**"To whom He was not announced, they shall see;
And those who have not heard shall understand."**

Paul's calling in life was to go and preach the gospel where it had never been preached before. The last thing he wanted was to go and plant a church right on top of a church that already existed.

Paul was called not only to be a planter of churches but I believe his primary calling was to go from place to place sharing the love of Jesus Christ.

Do you know you're calling in life? And furthermore are you walking in that calling that God has for you?

I would add that not everyone is called in the same way...I can remember talking with my pastor one day in his office and he asked me if I thought the Lord might call me one day to plant a church...for me that was an impossible task to accomplish and I remember very clearly saying to him that I thought it would be better for me with my personality and abilities if I came and ministered to a church that was already established.

Paul said this over in 1 Corinthians 3:5-6 when he spoke of two people with two different callings. He said ⁵**Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? ⁶I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.** Remember we each have different callings but it's all to the glory of God.

Look with me at verses 22-24 which say ²²**For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you. ²³But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you, ²⁴whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while.**

At the beginning of Paul's letter he had expressed his desire to visit Rome and then here at the end we see the same desires. Paul also here acknowledges that though he had the desire to visit it just wasn't what he was called to as it was his calling to go to places the Lord hadn't yet been proclaimed.

Having said that though we do see that Paul was planning to come and visit on his way to Spain and he hoped that he could enjoy their company for a while. I have to just say there is nothing like some good fellowship amongst brothers and sisters in Christ.

I am always amazed that in the few places I have travelled and lived in the world that there has always been a faithful group of people I could speak with and be encouraged by who name the name of Christ.

Look at verses 25-27 which say ²⁵But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. ²⁶For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. ²⁷It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things. Here we can see Paul's next steps as he had been tasked to take a gift to the believers in Jerusalem. The Gentiles had a heart to bless the Jewish believers knowing they had received so much through them spiritually as a people.

The church in Jerusalem had seen much persecution and as such had seen much hardship financially.

And then look at verses 28-29 which say ²⁸Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain. ²⁹But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

I might just add here very briefly that for all the good plans that Paul had including this desire to visit those in Rome who believed...how was it that Paul finally did come to Rome? He didn't come as a free man but instead as a prisoner...a man in chains for the Gospel of Jesus Christ who had appealed to Caesar and found himself on a boat having done nothing wrong or deserving of punishment, an enemy of the state you could say, a religious prisoner as seen in the book of Acts.

Have you ever had a time in your life that you had some really good plans to serve the Lord? And then they just didn't work out? What

Paul desired and had in his heart wasn't bad...it just didn't work out the way he thought it would.

I have realized in my life that when I am thinking about things that I tend to plan out what all is going to happen and how situations are going to unfold and what I am going to say and how others are going to respond...**and do you know what?** I can honestly say that things rarely happen the way I think they will.

While you and I may have plans and thoughts in life we must always just as Paul did be willing to yield to the leading of the Holy Spirit, to submit our plans unto the One that can lead us in paths of righteousness.

As we close today I want to just encourage you and I that we are to be one in Christ, that there should be unity in our midst, that we won't see that unity in our own abilities or power **but that instead as we seek to live as Christ did, as we choose to lay down our lives on behalf of each other and we love without hypocrisy in our lives** that it is then that we will see the unity that is found only in Jesus.

You may feel like you are different than everyone else...and I guess the reality is that all of us are very different from one person to another but at the end of the day the Lord brings us together for His glory and we certainly do have each other.

Let us endeavor to keep the bond of peace, to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit, to prefer others over ourselves and to not nitpick over small things.

Let me pray for us.

Romans 15:1-29 “Paul’s Desire To Visit”

Cross References

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