

Romans: The Power of the Gospel (The Gospel Unites)
How to Do God's Good in the World
May 31, 2017
Romans 15

Paul is addressing the conflict which differing convictions have brought into the Roman church.

Romans 15:1-3 *We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. 2 Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up. 3 For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me. 4 For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope. 5 May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, 6 so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 7 Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. 8 For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, so that the promises made to the patriarchs might be confirmed 9 and, moreover, that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.*

The strong tend to look down on the weak, and the weak often condemn the strong because of their liberty. Paul forbids both attitudes.

The Point: Christian love is not just negative. **Romans 12:9** *Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.*

Love refuses to do that which is harmful to others, and it aggressively seeks to do "good" to others.

Two major topics dominate verses 1-13:

A) Pleasing others instead of ourselves (verses 1-3) and,

B) Praising God in unity and harmony (verses 4-13).

(P)lease our neighbors: A subtle but important shift takes place in Ch. 15. Paul sets aside the term "brother" for "neighbor" and, so, broadens the application of his teaching on liberty and love. My neighbor includes my enemy.

Christianity turns the world's thinking upside-down concerning the "strong" and the "weak." The world thinks those who are strong should use their strength to take advantage of the weak.

An example of "doing good" can be found in the use of our spiritual gifts. They are given to each believer so that each may minister out of his strength to those who are weak in this area.

He has not said we should please our neighbor in any way our neighbor dictates. We are to please our neighbor as God dictates.

We please others by:

(1) Working toward the good of others, "...for their good..."

(2) Working toward the edification of others, "...to build them up..."

(3) Pleasing others as Christ Himself pleased men. "... For even Christ did not please himself..."

In other words, the "good" of our neighbor must be understood in the light of God's eternal purposes spoken of in the gospel.

1. Seeking the "good" of our neighbor must first begin by seeking his salvation,
2. Our neighbor's "good," which begins with salvation, should then move on to his edification. We must avoid every attitude and action which would tear down our neighbor. Instead we find ways to build up others.
3. When we seek to please men, we must do so as the Lord did. This clearly means that we please our neighbor by being willing to put up with the reproaches of those who would criticize our convictions and seek to change us, rather than to accept us.

Romans 15:3-4 ...*"The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me. 4 For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.*

The "good" which the Christian should do to please his neighbor may very well produce not only disapproval but even reproach. Pleasing others as Paul teaches is nothing like the man-pleasing which is really selfish and self-serving co-dependency.

Praising God " V.6...*with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Unity and harmony bring glory to God.

Paul Seeks the Support of the Roman Church

Romans 15:18-20 and 23-24 *I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done— 19 by the power of signs and wonders, through the power of the Spirit of God. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ. 20 It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, ...23 But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to visit you, 24 I plan to do so when I go to Spain. I hope to see you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a while...*

It is important for Christians to freely support the work of advancing God's work in the world.

2Cor 9:7-8 *Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.*