

ROMANS 15

A debt to the weak (1–6). The strong must bear the weak and help them grow, and that takes love and patience. If we live to please ourselves, we will not follow the example of Christ who lived to please the Father and help others.

A debt to the lost (7–21). God saved the Jews so that they might reach the Gentiles and lead them in praising the Lord. God has saved us so that we might win others. We have a debt to pay (1:14).

A debt to Israel (22–33). The Gentiles are indebted to the Jews (John 4:22). And that debt is paid by praying for them (Ps. 122:6), witnessing to them in love, and sharing our material gifts to assist them.

ROMANS 16

We are prone to honor Paul and forget the many ordinary people who helped make his ministry possible. Paul was the human author of the epistle to the Romans, but Tertius wrote it down (v. 22), Gaius gave Paul a place to live and work (v. 23), and Phoebe carried the completed letter to Rome. Nobody in God’s family is unimportant to Him, and no ministry is insignificant. Find the work He wants you to do and faithfully do it.

A “hidden romance” of history is not recorded in the Bible. When and how did Priscilla and Aquila risk their lives to save Paul (vv. 3–4)? When were Andronicus and Junia in prison with Paul (v. 7)? How was Rufus’s mother a mother to Paul (v. 13)? Who were the troublemakers about whom Paul warned the Roman believers (vv. 17–18)? Perhaps one day in heaven we will be given the answers!

Meanwhile, the important thing is that we are obedient to the Lord (v. 19) and lead others into “obedience to the faith” (v. 26). The God of patience and comfort (15:5), the God of hope (15:13), and the God of peace (16:20) will establish you and enable you (16:25).

1 CORINTHIANS 1

Even though believers are “all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28), the local church often suffers from division. Why?

For one thing, we forget the calling we have in Christ (vv. 2, 9, 24–29). It is only by God’s grace that we have been called, and this fact should humble us and encourage us to love one another (John 15:17).

Another factor is our tendency to follow human leaders and develop a fan club mentality. Christ died for us and lives to bless us, and He must have the preeminence.

A third factor is dependence on human wisdom and philosophies, of which there were many in Corinth. The world's wisdom had crept into the church, and it did not mix with the wisdom of God (Isa. 8:20). Various theologies are the attempts of scholars to interpret the Word of God, but they are not the Word. Never allow them to be a cause of division.

1 CORINTHIANS 2

Power (1–5). Paul did not imitate the itinerant teachers in Corinth who depended on their eloquence and intellectual brilliance. Paul's faith was in God, not in himself (Zech. 4:6). He wanted sinners to trust in Christ's power. You may think you lack ability to serve God, but God can turn your weakness into strength. The gospel still works (Rom. 1:16)!

Wisdom (6–16). The Jews asked for demonstrations of power and the Greeks looked for wisdom, both of which are available in Jesus Christ (1:24). A deeper wisdom of God is available for those who are mature (Heb. 5:12–14). Allow the Spirit of God to teach you about the Son of God from the Word of God, and grow up in Him.

Wisdom and power go together. They need each other, and they keep the Christian life balanced.

1 CORINTHIANS 3

Maturing (1–4). We never outgrow the nourishing milk of the Word (1 Pet. 2:2), but we cannot grow strong unless we also have the "solid food" (Heb. 5:12–14; Matt. 4:4). You grow by eating and exercising (1 Tim. 4:6–8), and it takes both. Age is no guarantee of spiritual maturity.

Harvesting (5–9). Everybody has a place in the Lord's harvest, and all are doing His work (John 4:34–38). There must be no competing or comparing, for the Lord alone recognizes the work and gives the reward. It makes no difference who the servant is so long as Jesus Christ is Lord of the harvest.

Building (10–17). Paul writes about the local church and the materials we put into it as we minister (Prov. 2:1–5; 3:13–15). Substituting man's wisdom for God's Word means building with perishable materials that will burn up at the judgment seat of Christ.

Glorifying God (18–23). Because the Corinthian believers gloried in human teachers (1:12) and human wisdom, they robbed God of the glory that rightly belonged to Him. "Let no one boast in men" is a command, not a suggestion.

¹Wiersbe, W. W. 1997, c1991. *With the word Bible commentary*. Thomas Nelson: Nashville