

Christ Our Example Romans 15:1-13



In chapter 14, Paul has been arguing that the strong and the weak should be concerned about and considerate of one another. He spent a great deal of time reminding the strong that they are to receive their brothers, but not to argue with them about ancillary matters and that they are to be sure not to do anything that might cause their weaker brother or sister to stumble.

We spent some time on this particular point last week.

He equally spent a great deal of effort reminding the weak not to “pass judgment” on their strong brothers and sisters in Christ. In fact, he repeated that point four times!

We also spent a great deal of time discussing the difference between making judgements which we do all the time (we are free moral agents of God) and passing judgment on our brother.

If we cannot judge between right and wrong, we will never be able to decide what things to do and what things to avoid, we will never be able to detect when a brother or sister is overtaken in a fault, if we cannot judge.

But that is not what the Bible is talking about when it mentions judging or passing judgment on another person. That is God’s job, He is the judge. We can tell them something is forbidden by Jesus and the apostles, but as far as judging them, that is God’s business.

Now, as a reminder. Behind all of this is the message, a single thread that started in chapter 12 and continues up to now. As believers we are to love one another, we are to walk in love.

Chapter 15 verses 1-13 bring this whole discussion, this whole argument, to its conclusion. Paul will summarize his argument then go to the Old Testament to prove that this is exactly how the promised Messiah behaved.

Paul will conclude the first six verses with a prayer asking God to give the Roman believers the strength and conviction to follow the example of Christ. This is the first of five prayers here in chapters 15 and 16. In the Greek, each of these start with the participle **δέ (de)**, which can be translated **but, and, now, then,** or **also**. Let’s quickly take a peek at them:

- 1) *“May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, **6** that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Ro 15:5-6 ESV)*
- 2) *“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.” (Ro 15:13 ESV)*
- 3) *“May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.” (Ro 15:33 ESV)*
- 4) *“The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.” (Ro 16:20 ESV)*
- 5) *“Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages **26** but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith — **27** to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.” (Ro 16:25-27 ESV)*

One last thing before we jump into our text. Here in chapter 15, Paul uses **four different title names** for God. But they are more than titles, they are attributes that characterize our God. But they are not only characteristics of our God, but they are also things our God give us in his grace. Let me show you these now and we will unpack them as we go through chapter 15.

1) God of Endurance (or perseverance) (15:5)

2) God of Encouragement (or comfort) (15:5)

“May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus,” (Ro 15:5 ESV)

3) God of Hope (confident expectation) (15:13)

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.” (Ro 15:13 ESV)

4) God of Peace (Rom 15:33 and 16:20)

“May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.” (Ro 15:33 ESV)

15:1 We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. 2 Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. 3 For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me." 4 For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. 5 May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, 6 that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Vs 1 Continuing on with the weak and strong discussion, Paul comes to a clear and indeed even **obvious** conclusion.

We who would deem ourselves strong in any particular issue, have a **debt**, that is what the Greek word means, we have an **obligation** to help carry, to bear as if a burden, the infirmities of those who are weak.

We have an **obligation** to refrain from activity that might cause a brother or sister to stumble.

But instead **“bear”** the failings of the weak. This Greek word does not mean to tolerate, but **to bear a burden**.

The word translated “failings” is the only place in the entire New Testament this word is used. It seems to focus on an error that arise from a weakness in the mind.

Phillips translation:

“We who have strong faith ought to shoulder the burden of the doubts and qualms of the weak and not just go our own sweet way.” (Ro 15:1 Phillips)

So, in context the strong, who understood the food laws were no longer applicable, **have a debt** to help those weaker brothers along. Weak and strong, not right and wrong.

Vs 2-3 - So we should work to build one another up (edification).

As believers, this is one of the ways we show love for one another, not focused on doing what I want to do, because I have the freedom to do it.

But instead, thinking of my brothers and sisters in Christ. Focusing on them and ensuring that what I am doing is not damaging them but building them up.

“3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.” (Php 2:3-4 ESV)

Then Paul comes to a point: For that is what Jesus did. He did not focus on himself, but instead focused on others. **Paul sets forth Christ as the grand example of the one who was not focused on pleasing himself.**

This quote is from **Psalm 69**, one of the great **Messianic Psalms**. This Psalm is the most quoted Psalm in the New Testament! Paul quotes part of Psalm 69:9:

“For zeal for your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me.” (Ps 69:9 ESV)

Now in context, Psalm 69 is talking about how the scorn or reproach that **Israel had for Yahweh**, fell on **Christ!**

What Paul is doing is seizing on the broader principle. Christ did not operate to please himself, but to please the Father and operate for our good, even though it would cost him greatly!

Jesus stands as the supreme example of sacrificial love! The supreme example of willingness to suffer for others:

“3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” (Php 2:3-8 ESV)

Vs 4 - So, when we read the Old Testament, we should understand, even though we are no longer under the Mosaic law, even though we no longer keep many Old Testament traditions, laws, festival days, etc, even though we no longer offer animal sacrifices, even though we no longer worship on Saturday, or at the temple.

Those things were written for our instruction, (for our teaching and learning). There is a great deal of wisdom in the Old Testament. To ignore or avoid the Old Testament is to miss a great deal that God wants us to see and hear!

The Scriptures, which contain the things that were written in former days have been written for our instruction! The Bible makes this clear over and over again:

“Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.” (1Co 10:11 ESV)

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,” (2Ti 3:16 ESV)

Now at this point we have enough information to understand the reason, we are so laser focused on the Scriptures.

God sovereignly worked through the lives of human beings to create the Scriptures a book written for our instruction. But Paul does not stop there!

It is through the Scriptures that we can find **steadfastness** and **comfort** that we might have **hope**.

1) First steadfastness or perseverance.

You and I will face tribulation, we will face times of disappointment, we will face times of great sorrow. There will be times when Satan will whisper in our ear, this is not working, give up, walk away, quit.

You know what we should do? Yes, get in the Scriptures. Go find one of those amazing stories where God works against all odds to bring an amazing turn of events. Go read about about David as he faced Goliath.

Go ready about God as He fed the nation of Israel with manna for forty years.

2) But it is not just perseverance that we get from the Scriptures, it is also encouragement or comfort.

I do not know about you. But sometimes I just need to be encouraged, I just need to be comforted. When your heart is breaking, when you are fearful, or when you are hurting. Go to the Scriptures, it is there that God will encourage you, it is there that God will comfort you.

When Sandy talks about the “rescue verses” she is reminding us that the Bible is meant to provide us with comfort. In our down times, in our troubled moments, go read Romans 8 or one of the great comfort Psalms.

You see these things are written (the Scriptures) to help **stabilize us** and make us **steadfast** and to **provide us with HOPE**.

The Scriptures are the means that God used to create endurance and comfort that we might have hope.

Not a hope like the world has (**wish**), but a **confident expectation**.

Vs 5-6 - So the Scriptures are meant to provide endurance and encouragement, for **their source** is the **God of endurance and encouragement**.

May that God... The God of endurance and encouragement, grant the church in Rome (Jew and Gentile) **to live in harmony with one another**, which is “**in accord**” or literally “**comes down**” from Messiah Jesus.

That with a beautiful unity (in the body) with one voice, (like a symphony) in concert, with one voice, glorify God who is the Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah!

This opened with reminding the strong they have an obligation to the weak, but it is much bigger than that, as the body of Christ, we have an obligation to one another to grow in grace and to grow together, in harmony, with our unified voice glorifying God!

Here Paul draws his point to a conclusion with a prayer. **This is actually the first of five prayers here at the close of the book of Romans:**

7 Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. 8 For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, 9 and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name." 10 And again it is said, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people." 11 And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him." 12 And again Isaiah says, "The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope." 13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

Vs 7 - Therefore, Paul is making a conclusion. Therefore, **based on all he just said. Receive one another, accept one another, befriend one another, bring one another** into your lives. Welcome each other...

The verb is present tense and an imperative. It is a present tense command. It brings with it the idea of welcome and keep welcoming one another into your lives.

The example: As **Christ welcomed you**, as Christ received you, as Christ brought you into His life.

In Christ, God has welcomed us into his family!

Look around just our Sunday School class, this is a very eclectic group, doctors, lawyers, engineers, educators, white collar, blue collar, and everything in between. Doctorate degrees, Masters degrees Bachelor degrees, Associate degrees, and no degrees.

We are so different, yet God has brought us together here and we are to integrate and if I can use a Star Trek word "assimilate" for the glory of God! Do this, for and because it glorifies God!

Vs 8-9 - Here is Paul's point, the Messiah (Jesus) became a servant **διάκονος (diakonos)** to the Jews, the **circumcised**.

Jesus the promised Messiah, became a "servant" to the Jew, the circumcised.

1) To show **God's truthfulness** and thereby **confirm the promises given to the patriarchs**.

To Abraham: *"No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations."* (Ge 17:5 ESV)

To Isaac: *"3 Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you, for to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father. 4 I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, 5 because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws."* (Ge 26:3-5 ESV)

To Jacob: *"13 And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, "I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring. 14 Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. 15 Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."* (Ge 28:13-15 ESV)

Now something should have caught your attention about all three of these promises made to the patriarchs.

Did anyone catch it?

- 2) With a **secondary benefit** (in order that) **the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy!**

God has fulfilled his promises to Israel that he made across time as given to the patriarchs. **In Christ, God also had the plan of bringing the Gentiles into the family of God!**

To prove these two points, Paul once again goes back to the Old Testament, as it is written and **he quotes four different passages:**

- 1) **First**, this quote is from II Sam 22:50 or Ps 18:49.

Both of these quotes are from David, and even in the Psalms the context, on the face, would seem to be David, but Paul is implying it is Jesus, and His plan was always praise God's name among the Gentiles. This was always the plan!

“For this I will praise you, O LORD, among the nations, and sing to your name.” (Ps 18:49 ESV)

Now we might not catch it here, but I want you to begin to see it. Psalm 18, is pointing to a time when the “nations” will worship God together (this is Jew and Gentile) the nations will sing to his name!

Vs 10 -

- 2) **Second**. And again, Paul goes back to quote the Old Testament to prove his point, and again, this time he quotes (Deut 32:43):

““Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people; For He will avenge the blood of His servants, And render vengeance to His adversaries; He will provide atonement for His land and His people.”” (De 32:43 NKJV)

Here Moses, sees into the future a time when Gentiles are rejoicing with God's people. Tucked away in the Old Testament we see the amazing promise of a coming time, when Jews and Gentiles would worship God together around His throne!

Vs 11 - Paul goes back to the Old Testament a third time to prove his point.

- 3) The **third** quote to prove the two points! This time Paul quotes **Ps 117:1:**
“Praise the LORD, all nations! Extol him, all peoples!” (Ps 117:1 ESV)

Here again, we see, tucked away in the Old Testament, this time in a Psalm is a promised time when all the nations (together) would praise the Lord. All the nations together would extol (lift up) in unison His glorious name!

Here in a multiethnic assembly, all equal before God, we see Jews and Gentiles worshipping God together praising His holy name!

POP QUIZ! What is Psalm 117 known for? **It is the shortest Psalm and the shortest chapter in the entire Bible.** Depending on the version you carry either this or Psalm 118 is the **middle of your Bible.**

But, Paul is not quite done!

Vs 12 - Three are not enough, now Paul goes to a prophecy from Isaiah and quotes Isaiah 11:10:

- 4) Here we find the **forth quote:**

“In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples — of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.” (Isa 11:10 ESV)

A promised day is coming, when the root of Jesse, this descendant of King David, shall stand, as a banner, or a signal or a ruler for the peoples. He is the one who would restore the whole world to a condition of righteousness and peace!

Paul has proven that Jesus came as a **servant to the Jews**, while at the same time, **with the plan to bring in the Gentiles**.

This was always God’s plan. It was foretold to the patriarchs, and it was foreshadowed in numerous verses in the Old Testament.

God’s plan was to breakdown the hostility that existed between Jew and Gentile and create one new man in Christ.

This is what he told the church in Ephesus:

“12 remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 ¶ For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility 15 by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, 16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. 17 And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.” (Eph 2:12-17 ESV)

Now, let’s not lose the story here. Paul has said all this not so that we could simply marvel that this was always God’s plan. But to remind us to accept and love one another, like God in Christ has accepted all of us and brought us into His family!

Vs 13 - Here we find the second of the five prayers, all starting with the Greek word δέ (de).

He is the God of endurance (Vs 5)

He is the God of encouragement (Vs 5)

He is the God of hope (Vs 13).

May this God, the Father, the God of endurance, the God of encouragement, the God of hope, fill all of us (today and forever) with **joy** and **peace**.

What a prayer. **Can I pray that over us right now?**

Here we are reminded that it is through the power of the Holy Spirit, that God produces this hope within believers.

Fill us with joy and peace so that in believing, believing in the Son and in the Father, so that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we would abound in hope!

Four Biblical Principles on Christian Liberty

- 1) **The Rule of Liberty:** Anything that is not expressly prohibited, is permitted.

"All things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be dominated by anything." (1Co 6:12 ESV)

"All things are lawful," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful," but not all things build up." (1Co 10:23 ESV)

"... Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats." (Ro 14:20b ESV)

- 2) **The Rule of Conscience:** We should never do things that we “feel” are wrong. We should not sin against our conscience. But we should not impose those “feelings” on others.

"22 The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves. 23 But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin." (Ro 14:22-23 ESV)

- 3) **The Rule of Expediency:** Our liberty should not cause the unsaved person to stumble.

"19 ¶ For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. 20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. 21 To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. 22 To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. 23 I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings." (1Co 9:19-23 ESV)

"31 So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 32 Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, 33 just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved." (1Co 10:31-33 ESV)

- 4) **The Rule of Love:** Our liberty should not cause a weaker brother or sister to stumble.

"23 ¶ "All things are lawful," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful," but not all things build up. 24 Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor. 25 Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience. 26 For "the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof." 27 If one of the unbelievers invites you to dinner and you are disposed to go, eat whatever is set before you without raising any question on the ground of conscience. 28 But if someone says to you, "This has been offered in sacrifice," then do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for the sake of conscience — 29 I do not mean your conscience, but his. For why should my liberty be determined by someone else's conscience? 30 If I partake with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of that for which I give thanks? 31 So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 32 Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, 33 just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved." (1Co 10:23-33 ESV)

"19 So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. 20 Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats. 21 It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble." (Ro 14:19-21 ESV)