

SERMON NOTES

By Pastor John Paul Miller

In The Grip of God's Grace

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans

Romans 15:1-13 - "When Christians Disagree (Pt. 3)"

Romans 15:1, *"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves."*

Paul is giving us very clear instructions on what to do when Christians disagree – it's a plea for unity and harmony.

Review of prior points:

1. The strong should receive the weak (14:1)
2. The strong should not despise the weak (14:3)
3. The weak should not judge the strong (14:3)

Why?

1. Because God has received him (14:3)
2. Because God will help him stand (14:4)
3. Because Jesus Christ is LORD (14:9)
4. Because we will all give an account to God (14:12)

Paul's focus was on the attitudes the strong should have towards the weak.

Paul then moves on to actions, and gave four positive principles to live by:

1. Live so you won't stumble others (14:13)
2. Live with proper priorities (14:17)
3. Live to build up others (14:19)
4. Live with a clear conscience (14:22)

Now, we move on to one more principle to live by.

When Christians disagree, what should we do?

Follow Christ's example; who did not please Himself.

Romans 15:3, *"For even Christ pleased not himself;..."*

When you are considering the exercising of your liberty, ask yourself:

1. Is it Beneficial? (1 Cor. 6:12)
2. Is it Enslaving? (1 Cor. 6:12)
3. Is it Edifying? (1 Cor. 10:23)
4. Will it stumble others? (Rom. 14:21)
5. Does it violate my conscience? (Rom. 14:23)
6. Is it Christ-like?

Jesus Christ is always our example!

Romans 15:1-13, *"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me. For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God. Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people. And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust. Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.."*

Paul begins now by speaking to the strong and He identifies Himself as being in their camp (vs. 1-2)

What is it that Paul wants the strong to do?

What is their responsibility towards the weak?

1. The strong ought to bear with the failings or weaknesses of the weak (vs. 1)

Romans 15:1, *"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak,..."*

- We are not to crush, despise, nor cause them to stumble
- We are not even to tolerate them
- We are to carry and support them
- In Romans 13:8, we are told that we have a "debt of love"

Romans 13:8, *"Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law."*

- The strong are to help the weak – one person's strength can compensate for another person's weakness.

2. The strong are not to please themselves (vs. 1)

Romans 15:1, ... *and not to please ourselves.*"

We are not to be self-centered and self-seeking

- it's against our nature to be unselfish!

3. We should seek to please our neighbor (vs. 2)

Romans 15:2, *"Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification."*

You might ask, "but I thought we weren't to be men pleasers?"

That's true but, neighbour-pleasing, which scripture commands, must not be confused with men pleasing, which scripture condemns.

Neighbour-pleasing is 'for his good' to build him up (vs. 2)

It's adjusting your lifestyle for the spiritual good of others.

This is the principle – don't live a self-pleasing life; live a neighbour-pleasing life which is for their good and edification.

Your life either edifies or destroys!

Application for the Church – its to be build it up through the teaching of the Word and to strengthen them in the faith.

Ask yourself, "is there anything in my lifestyle which I ought to change for the good of another?"

Why should we follow Christ's example of pleasing our neighbour instead of ourselves?

Four Reasons:

I. Because Christ did not please Himself (vs. 3-4)

Romans 15:3-4, *"For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me. For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."*

Paul as he so often does gives a theological foundation for his appeal. His simple statement sums up the meaning of the incarnation, and the character of Christ's earthly life (vs. 3).

Notice the words, *as it is written*, - (He quotes Psalms 69:9)

Because of Psalms 69, Paul makes this statement about the Old Testament Scripture.

Three truths:

1. Its contemporary intention – “*for our learning*”
2. Its inclusive value – everything that was written
3. Its practical purpose – comfort and hope

The point is that Jesus didn't please Himself.

Consider Philippians 2

II. Because Christ is the way to United Worship

Romans 15:5-6, “*Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

These verses are a benediction, or prayer wish.

What was Paul praying for?

1. Unity (vs. 5) – Jews and Gentiles

To stop being so nit-picky

2. United Worship (vs. 6)

R. Kent Hughes – “We impoverish our worship and offer poor praise to God by stubbornness and lack of love to fellow believers. But, oh how beautiful the worship is when we worship together in unity (cf. Psalms 133).”

It is no small thing to be asked to forgo legitimate rights for the building up of brothers and sisters. This is demanding, but perfectly reasonable and possible, first, because Christ did it, and, second, because it is indispensable to true worship.”

The blessed benefits of true worship – unity and glory!

III. Because Christ accepted you (vs. 7)

Romans 15:7, “*Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.*”

In its context, it's the Jews and Gentiles who were separated by hate.

Here is the true basis for reception in the local church:

It's not:

- denominational affiliation
- spiritual maturity
- social status
- race, etc.

But those whom Christ has received

Notice it's to the Glory of God.

IV. Because Christ became a servant (vs. 8-13)

Romans 15:8-13, *"Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people. And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust. Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."*

Lessons: Jesus came to show to the Jews the fidelity of God to His promises, and to show to the Gentiles the wonders of His grace and mercy.

These two groups could not be more opposite: Jews – legalistic; Gentiles – morally loose

Yet, Jesus became a servant to both of them.

Our hearts should be big enough to serve both; for God shows mercy to all.

Verse 13 is a beautiful benediction:

Romans 15:13, *"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."*

It describes the Christians Life:

1. Lived in fellowship with God – *the God of hope*
2. A life that is full – *fill you*
3. A life bright and beautiful – *all joy and peace*
4. A life of faith – *in believing*

5. A life of hope – overflow with hope - *that ye may abound in hope*
6. A life of power - *through the power of the Holy Ghost*

Paul's prayer is that both the Jews and Gentiles would receive each other and wait with joy and peace for the glorious coming of Christ.

It goes for us too!

In essentials - unity
In non-essentials - liberty
In all things - charity