

## The Book of Romans Study Guide

### Chapter 15 part 1

In Romans 14, Paul instructed the believers of Rome to stop judging one another over secondary matters like dietary restrictions and how they observed certain days, urging them instead to live harmoniously despite differing consciences. He emphasized that believers must prioritize love and mutual edification, willingly surrendering their personal freedoms to avoid causing another person to stumble in faith.

#### **15:1-6**

- v 1 Paul narrows his focus to believers who consider themselves to be spiritually strong by calling upon them to use their strength to serve others who are weak in their faith. His call to “bear the weaknesses” is consistent with his words in Galatians 6:2 –

“Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Messiah.”

And again in Philippians 2:3-4 –

“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”

- v 2 His exhortation to please our neighbor for good to his edification is all about building others up rather than tearing them down. That principle connects directly to his words in Ephesians 4:29 –

“Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.”

And that raises the issue of the common denominator of all of the disputes for the Romans and for us—namely, the way that our words can cause or even be interpreted as judgment, thus destroying the harmony within a congregation or individual relationships.

- v 3 Paul explains that Yeshua serves as the ultimate example of selflessness. To show how the Tanakh (Old Testament) foreshadowed that reality, he quotes from Psalm 69:9, where David declares that because he loves God's house so much, people who hate God were venting their fury on him instead. In the same way, the people who actually hated God the Father, in spite of an outward sense of religiosity, poured venom, insults, and ultimate crucifixion onto Yeshua, who absorbed that abuse without retaliating.

Paul's point is that if Yeshua did not use His divine rights to please Himself, and was willing to absorb shame and abuse to serve others, then comfortable believers like those in Rome could certainly absorb a measure of inconvenience by laying down their rights that have been raised in chapter 14 in order to please their neighbors.

- v 4 Paul then adds that these Old Testament accounts were preserved in Scripture to instruct modern believers, providing them with the encouragement and endurance needed to

maintain hope.

- v 5 Paul shifts from instructing the Roman church to praying over them, by offering a pastoral benediction for corporate unity. His petition for God to grant the believers of Rome to be of the same mind, seems out of place in light of the differing opinions they had in regard to food and days and Paul's counsel to accept those differences. But, by basing that sense of agreement according to Messiah Yeshua, he is not advocating for a generic, worldly peace where everyone simply agrees to disagree. Instead, our unity must be modeled after Yeshua's own self-sacrificial character. In other words, we are all called to accept one another's differences because we are all submissively following the same self-giving Messiah.
- v 6 He shows that the ultimate goal of unity among believers is to glorify God with one voice. Remember, this was a time when there were great challenges getting Jewish and Gentile believers to sit at the same table for a meal. So this is a call for former rivals to stand side-by-side, lifting their voices in perfect, harmonious unison to glorify God. And the only way to do that is by placing the greatest emphasis on the great eternal things that Yeshua has accomplished on our behalf, instead of things that only relate to this world.

### **15:7-13**

- v 7 Paul now builds on his exhortation not to judge one another in matters of conscience by giving a general call to accept one another in the same way that Messiah accepts us. What, then, does God's acceptance of us entail? It means, first of all, giving grace to others, marked by a sense of compassion for the weak and even for those who are resistant to the standard of righteousness given in God's Word. And, as we see in this verse, it is the kind of acceptance that brings glory to God, as opposed to dissension within the body that disgraces God's name in the eyes of others.
- v 8 He shows that it is an acceptance based on serving one another. In particular, believers are called to emulate the way that Messiah served His Jewish people (what he calls the circumcision). We see here that He did that by proving the truthfulness of God's promises, including His covenant with Abraham and his descendants that would result in a blessing to all the families of the earth. So, that is a call within the general body of believers to promote acceptance of one another by upholding the validity of the Abrahamic Covenant today and standing against false teachings like replacement theology that drives a division between believers and harms our testimony to the Jewish people.
- In light of Yeshua's example, we can also serve one another by keeping our own promises and commitments. Like Yeshua, we can serve others in humility and in practical ways by creating a welcoming space for others, caring for those in need, visiting those who are alone, grieving and comforting those who mourn and struggle with life. We serve by providing a place where God's message to humanity is proclaimed and taught so that we do not wander in ignorance. But when we speak the truth to others, we can serve them and build acceptance by doing so with conviction and accountability, but also gently and with compassion, and leaving plenty of room for listening on our part. Yeshua did all of these things, and so can we by creating an environment where serving others is a priority.

v 9-11 Paul, then shows how Messiah served the Gentiles by bringing them mercy and the privilege of glorifying God.

So, if we are to accept one another as Messiah has accepted us to the glory of God, as we are instructed in verse 7, that means showing mercy to one another.

- That means things like choosing not to hold a person's past offenses against them once they have apologized.
- It means guarding the reputation of someone who messed up instead of gossiping about their failures with others.
- It means actively passing up opportunities to get even or see someone get punished.
- It means accepting that everyone is a work in progress and learning to live with irritating habits without getting angry.
- Refuse to isolate or cast people out just because navigating the relationship becomes difficult.

Those are just a few practical ways that we can show mercy toward others that is based on resisting the urge to judge them, and instead on seeking ways to help them bring glory to God, just as Messiah did for Gentiles that was a radical concept when it happened, but now is taken for granted.

Then, in the second part of verse 9, and continuing through verse 11, Paul quotes a number of passages in the Tanakh (Old Testament) that depict God's desire for Gentiles to join in praising, singing and rejoicing in Adonai, which by implication, means joining together with Jews in doing so. And that caps this teaching on acceptance within the body. For when we stand side-by-side worshipping God, that becomes the key manifestation of accepting the value of other people, while at the same time exercising a shared expression of our will that is accepted by God.

Practically speaking, that is a call for every congregation to be a reflection of God's acceptance of Jews and Gentiles alike by making sure that Jews and Gentiles are equally welcome and able to worship together.

v 12 Paul bases this calling on a quotation from Isaiah 11:10 regarding the Messiah, identified as coming from the root of Jesse, who will rule over Gentiles and give them hope. But since He is from the root of Jesse, the same must be true for Jews.

v 13 As a result, Paul offers a benediction for this section, asking the "God of hope," by the power of the Holy Spirit, to fill all believers with all joy (*simcha*) and peace (*shalom*). And those are the characteristics of supernatural unity between historically divided groups, and the same is true for any congregation today.