

## The Book of Romans Study Guide

### Chapter 15 part 2

In the first part of this chapter, Paul called upon the believers of Rome to work towards unity in the body by using terms like pleasing our neighbor, edifying or building up one another, and accepting one another in the same way that Messiah accepts us. He continues that sense of positive exhortation in the latter part of this same chapter.

#### 15:14-21

- v 14 Paul provides a pastoral affirmation of the Roman believers' maturity and his validation of their self-governing authority as a community. By offering this high praise, he shows that he does not view them as spiritual infants. Thus, he outlines three distinct spiritual qualities that prove they possess everything needed to thrive:
- “Full of Goodness” (*agathosyne*), which refers to benevolent character and actions. That means the Roman believers were not just behaving correctly, their lives were marked by a genuine kindness and generosity toward one another.
  - “Complete in Knowledge” (*gnosis*), which means they possessed a spiritually and theologically mature, comprehensive grasp of the Gospel truth. They understood the core doctrines of faith, salvation, and the integration of Jewish and Gentile believers. They did not need Paul to teach them basic elementary truths.
  - “Competent to admonish one another” (*nouthetein*), which describe the ability to counsel, warn, instruct, or gently correct.

Taken together, these attributes show that they did not need outside apostolic intervention to resolve every dispute or moral issue.

- v 15 Paul exercises his apostolic authority, marked by the words, “because of the grace that was given to me from God.”/He explains that he wrote to them boldly on certain points, not because they were ignorant, but simply to remind them of the truths they already knew.

And that is an important lesson for all of us. We may have been believers for a long time, or we may have heard all of the stories and the basic teachings of Scripture. But it is important to be reminded of biblical principles by hearing them over and over again, so that they become a pattern for our thoughts and actions. It is the repetition that builds maturity and equips us to resist falsehood and to fall back into character weaknesses, like judging others and becoming arrogant about our beliefs.

- v 16 He backs up his authority in this matter by likening himself to a priest whose goal is to present the Gentiles to God as a sanctified sacrifice, made holy by the Holy Spirit.

- v 17-19 And then He acknowledges what God has accomplished through him in leading the Gentiles to obey the Lord, accompanied by signs and wonders and by the power of the Spirit. Because of these things, we need to take Paul's message to heart in these two chapters regarding the importance of accepting one another, not judging one another when it comes to differences and matters of conscience.

- v 20-21 And then he describes his personal strategy in ministry as being a call to preach the Gospel where Messiah was not known and to avoid building on another person's ministerial foundation. What does this mean for today?
- It means stepping out of your spiritual comfort zone to serve people who look, think, or live completely differently than you do, or to take on the challenge of starting a ministry where a need exists, even if you personally do not feel adequate for the task at the time. I can say with confidence that this is how our Messianic congregation came into existence.
  - It also means resisting the temptation to disrespect the on-going work of an existing ministry by trying to attract people to a similar work that you are starting in an area.
  - Instead, it calls for a partnership approach, just as Paul did by working together with other believers, as we will read about in the next chapter.

Paul now describes his upcoming plans for ministry.

**Read 15:22-29**

- v 22-24 Paul explains that he was prevented from visiting Rome because of his intense focus on preaching the gospel in places where Messiah was not known. Now that his work in the eastern Mediterranean, including Asia Minor (Turkey) and Macedonia and Greece, is complete, he indicates that he intends to visit the Romans while making a journey to Spain, hoping they will help finance his journey.
- v 25-26 But, before coming to Rome, Paul states that he must first travel to Jerusalem, in order to deliver a financial contribution to aid the impoverished Jewish believers there. He collected those funds from the Gentile believers in Macedonia and Achaia (where Corinth is located).
- v 27 He emphasizes that the Gentile believers have a material obligation to support Jewish believers because they have shared in Israel's spiritual blessings. This sense of a spiritual debt connects to his earlier words in 11:18, where he uses the metaphor of an olive tree to warn Gentile believers against spiritual pride, reminding them:
- “Do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you.”
- The “root” in chapter 11 represents Israel's patriarchs and covenants. The “spiritual blessings” in chapter 15 are the fruits of that same root—the Scriptures, the promises, and Messiah Himself. So, because Gentiles are structurally dependent on that Jewish root, they are now indebted and have a tangible duty to care for the Jewish believers in Jerusalem. Said another way, because Gentiles received eternal life through a Jewish Messiah, it is only right that they provide temporary, physical relief (money) to impoverished Jewish believers.
- v 28-29 Paul reassures them that once this assignment is complete, he will head to Spain by way of Rome. He expresses absolute confidence that his arrival will bring the fullness of the blessing of Messiah. That is an expectation of coming to them and not holding anything back, thus ensuring that the Romans would receive the deepest, most comprehensive understanding of salvation, sanctification, and God's grace.

Biblical history shows that Paul would indeed make it to Rome, but not under the circumstances that he was anticipating in this letter. While Paul expected a relatively quick trip to deliver the financial collection to Jerusalem and then sail straight to Italy, his timeline was severely disrupted by his arrest and subsequent legal battles. Paul was held as a prisoner for two full years in Caesarea Maritima under the Roman governors Felix and Festus (Acts 24:27). After appealing his case to Caesar, he was sent by ship toward Rome. Then, he experienced a catastrophic shipwreck off the coast of Malta (Acts 27–28), which forced him and the ship’s crew to winter on the island for three months. Finally, after nearly 4 years of complications, Paul arrived in Rome in the spring of 60 A.D. But, instead of arriving as a free missionary partner, pausing on his way to Spain, as he had originally planned in Romans 15, he entered the city as a Roman prisoner to await trial under Nero.

### 15:30-33

v 30-31 Paul makes two personal prayer requests:

- **Deliverance from people who oppose him in Judea**—this is likely a reference to anti-Messianic Jewish religious zealots in Judea who viewed him as a dangerous apostate and traitor to Judaism. His fears were entirely justified. As recorded later in Acts 21–23, when Paul arrived in Jerusalem, an angry mob attacked him in the temple, and a group of 40 men bound themselves to a vow to assassinate him. He was ultimately “delivered” from death by being taken into protective custody by Roman soldiers.

God answered that prayer, but the means of delivery was a Roman arrest, a temple riot, and years in prison. The lesson is that when you pray for help in a crisis (e.g., finances, health, career), do not mistake a messy or difficult process for a rejected prayer. It is a call to look for how God might be preserving you through the storm rather than lifting you out of it.

- **Acceptance of his ministry by saints (believers)**—Paul feared that the Jewish believers in Jerusalem would reject the financial love-offering he was bringing from Gentile congregations. If the Jerusalem believers refused the gift out of pride or prejudice, it would have shattered the fragile unity of the global body of Messiah, signaling a permanent rift between Jewish and Gentile believers. So, Paul desperately needed this “service” to be accepted to prove that both groups were one in Messiah.

v 32 He states that his reason for these requests is so that he could come to the Roman congregation with joy.

v 33 And, then, in keeping with his custom, he closes out this section with a benediction for the well-being of the Roman believers.