

Isaiah 11 speaks of the coming of the shoot from the stump Jesse.

The Spirit of the LORD will come upon him and he will bring righteousness to the earth.

Isaiah even says that the Gentiles will inquire of him,  
and the exiles of Judah and Israel will be restored.

Throughout Romans Paul has made it clear that the Gentiles have been grafted into Israel.

The Gentiles do not *replace* Israel,  
but rather, they have been *included with* Israel.

In chapter 15 of Romans, Paul cites Isaiah 11 in his list of quotations  
demonstrating that Christ has fulfilled the promises to the Fathers,  
*and* brought hope to the Gentiles.

Paul will also quote from Psalm 69:9 –

“the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me,”  
speaking of how our Lord Jesus Christ did not please himself.

Psalm 69:9 is perhaps more famous for the first half of the verse:

“zeal for your house has consumed me.”

This was spoken of our Lord when he cleansed the temple  
out of zeal for his Father’s house.

Psalm 69 is a Psalm of the cross.

Verse 21 is quoted in the gospels “they gave me sour wine to drink,”  
and verse 25 is quoted of Judas, “let no one dwell in their tents.”

It starts,

*Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck.*

*I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold;*

*I have come into deep waters, and the flood sweeps over me.*

*I am weary with my crying out; my throat is parched.*

*My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God.*

Perhaps as the economy worsens, the Psalms become more important.

When you are living in a bubble, the Psalms sound too gloomy!

But when the bubble bursts, you can be thankful that the Psalms provide comfort.

Because Psalm 69 was written for a time far worse than this.

You may be facing financial trouble (and that can be hard),

you may be facing emotional turmoil (and that’s not easy),

but Psalm 69 was written for the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus sang Psalm 69 so that you might find comfort in these words.

Because while you live in the middle of Psalm 69,  
imploring God to deliver you from the raging flood,  
you have been united to the one who has passed through Psalm 69.

Psalm 69 ends,

“let heaven and earth praise him, the seas and everything that moves in them.  
For God will save Zion and build up the cities of Judah.”

And so let's sing Psalm 69, verses 1-14.

**Introduction: Whatever Does Not Proceed from Faith Is Sin (14:20-23)**

Last time we saw at the beginning of chapter 14

that the strong should welcome the one who is weak –  
but not to quarrel over opinions.

The one who is weak (according to Paul)

is the one who tends to be judgmental and legalistic –  
that is, one who insists on following the details of the Mosaic system  
with respect to food laws and feasts/fasts.

Paul repeatedly warns the weak,

“Do not pass judgment on the one who eats.” (v3)

The weaker brother is one who is bound to the Mosaic food laws:

and the strong should receive him –  
so long as the weaker brother is willing to avoid quarreling about the subject.

(Of course, in Galatians where these “weaker brethren”  
are trying to force Gentiles to observe the Mosaic law, Paul will change his tone!)

It is important to understand that when Paul says not to make your brother stumble,  
he is saying, do not make him do something contrary to his conscience  
(in things indifferent).

Rather, if it is something indifferent, then it really doesn't matter – now does it?!  
Don't make your Jewish Christian brother eat pork!

Think about it this way:

if you can't eat the same foods,  
then how can you have table fellowship together?

A weak Jewish Christian might not invite Gentile Christians over for dinner  
(because they eat unclean foods),

and perhaps a strong Jewish Christians would insist on serving pork  
when Jewish Christians come for dinner.

The weak condemn the strong,

and the strong despise the weak.

*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.*

*It is good not to eat meat or drink wine*

*or do anything that causes your brother to stumble.*

*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.*

*(20-22)*

Again you see Paul's distinction between doctrine – “everything is indeed clean”

and practice – “it is good not ... to do anything that causes your brother to stumble.”

On the doctrine he won't budge: it's clean!

But in practice he doesn't care – it doesn't matter!

*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. (23)*

Jesus told us that all foods are clean

If you believe this, then you will not sin when you eat pork.

But if you don't understand this;

If you are still weak in faith,

then you will sin when you eat pork,

because you will be eating for the wrong reasons.

Okay, so what does this mean?

It means that we are to live in such harmony with one another,

in accord with Christ Jesus,

that together we may with one voice

glorify the God and Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

At which point we need to ask:

**1. What Does It Mean to “Live in Harmony”? (15:1-6)**

The phrase in verse 5, “live in harmony”

literally reads, “to think the same things with one another according to Christ Jesus.”

It's the same point Paul makes in Philippians 2

when he says that we should have the same mind in us that was also in Christ Jesus.

Because when Paul uses this word about “thinking” – about the “mind” –

he is not saying that people should sit around and talk (much less sit around and think).

Rather, he is talking about a mindset – a way of thinking that produces a certain sort of action.

After all, Paul believes that your doctrine (what you really think)

*will* result in action.

Therefore, thinking the same things together according to Christ Jesus,  
has less to do with our agreement on fine points of doctrine,  
and more to do with a common way of thinking and knowing and doing  
in communion with one another –  
because it is the mind of Christ that sets the pattern of thinking and knowing and doing!

And right up front, Paul sets out two things that characterize this common pattern:

a. Bear the Failings of the Weak (15:1)

The ESV says *we who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak.*  
What does it mean to “bear with”?

It means to put up with, or to tolerate.  
That is not really what this word means.  
Paul says that we are to *bear* the failings of the weak.

This is not a passive “putting up with.”  
It is an active “carrying” of their weaknesses.

I fear we are too passive.

(I know that I am!)

We are good at putting up with each other.

You can ignore someone and that can be “bearing *with* their weaknesses”!

But what does it mean that we *bear* their weaknesses.

We who are “able” are supposed to do two things:  
we are to bear the weaknesses of the “unable”  
and we are not to please ourselves.

They are juxtaposed in such a way as to make them polar opposites.

If you are bearing the weaknesses of others,  
then you are not pleasing yourself.

If you are pleasing yourself,  
then you are not bearing the weaknesses of others.

Okay –

so how do you bear the weaknesses of the “unable”?

This is the second thing that characterizes the common pattern of our life together.

b. Please Your Neighbor – to Build Him Up (15:2)

*Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.*

In English this could sound like you are supposed to do whatever your neighbor wants.

But Paul is saying,

Let each of us please the neighbor unto *the good, towards housebuilding*.

In the Roman church in Paul's day it meant this:

when you invite "other" Christians over for dinner, make sure the menu includes them!

Yes, it is certainly for the good of the neighbor,  
it is certainly to build him up.

But Paul makes it abundantly clear that the end, the goal of this "pleasing the neighbor,"  
is "edification" – building one another up into a spiritual house.

It does not build the house to serve pork to your Jewish Christian brother!

The first thing you have to learn

is that, "it's not about you!"

"Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" is simply *not* what you are supposed to be about!

Sometimes you hear someone say:

"That's just not my gift!"

As well might a mother say in the middle of the night,  
with her infant squalling and screaming  
with a poopy diaper and an empty belly,  
"that's just not my gift!"

It is your gift to love one another!

It is your gift to please your neighbor and build him up for his good.

Not that you do whatever *he* wants –

but that you please your neighbor *for the good, towards upbuilding*.

How are *you* seeking to build up others?

How are *you* seeking to please your neighbor for the good?

Are you *bearing* the weaknesses of the unable?

Or have you just been "putting up with each other"?

You who are strong *know* the pattern which Christ has established.

You know what it looks like.

I daresay that even without looking back down at verse 3,  
you *know* what is coming next!

*For Christ did not please himself.*

Jesus did not just “bear with” our weaknesses.  
He *bore* our weaknesses –  
    he carried our iniquities.  
He sought our good – he sought to build us up.

*As it is written,*  
    *“The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.”*  
This is from Psalm 69:9.  
    Jesus thought first of the glory of his Father.  
    And he thought about us.

But Paul adds that  
    *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.*

Psalm 69:9 is talking about Jesus.  
    It is saying that Jesus endured the scorn of the cross.  
But it is saying this about Jesus,  
    in order to instruct *us*.

Because Jesus has endured, therefore we have hope.  
Because Jesus pleased his Father – and pleased us – rather than please himself,  
    therefore we do not seek to please ourselves.

You have need of endurance.  
You have need of encouragement.

The road is long and hard – and sometimes it is very painful.

Where will find endurance?  
What will strengthen you to walk in this way?

The encouragement of the scriptures.  
    One of the things I have enjoyed most about working on the Psalter project over the years  
    is the time spent in the Psalms.  
I don’t believe that everyone needs to have a “daily devotional” time.  
But if you are going to have hope – if you are going to survive the trials you face –  
    then *you must* know the scriptures.  
And there is no way to come to know the scriptures  
    that does not start with *reading them*, and *hearing them*.  
If you have to drive a lot, then get an audio Bible.

Maybe you haven't been regular in reading the scriptures with your family.  
Now is a good time to start.

Paul knows that what he is calling us to  
does not come naturally.

It only comes from God.  
And so turns from command to prayer:

*May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you  
to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus,  
that together you may with one voice  
glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

God is building us into a house – training us into a choir –  
that our voices (indeed, our lives) might become one in giving glory to God.

## **2. Therefore Welcome One Another as Christ Has Welcomed You (15:7)**

*Therefore,*  
going back now to the place where Paul started this back in 14:1,  
*welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you,  
for the glory of God.*

Sometimes we get caught up in the details,  
and we lose sight of the point.

It would be really easy for me to say:  
“We need to be better at welcoming visitors!”

And we do.

But we could wind up with the world's best program for making visitors feel welcome,  
and yet *miss the point* of what Paul is saying!

Because Paul is not saying “make people feel welcome”  
he is saying “welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you.”

How has Christ welcomed you?  
Did he just greet you warmly and ask friendly questions?  
Or did he make you part of the family and bring you into his home?

*Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you.*

Did Jesus just have his friends over?  
Did he come to seek and to save the righteous?  
Or sinners?

“While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”!

How has the Messiah welcomed you?  
You Gentile!  
You unwashed, unclean, Gentile!  
No faithful Israelite would allow you in their home –  
but Jesus, the Messiah of Israel, has welcomed you.

And how do you repay him?  
Whom do you welcome into your home?  
(or should I say *his* home? For all that you have belongs to him!)

And to show you that what I am talking about is nothing new,  
let me quote from John Chrysostom (fifth century):

“He bids us invite to supper those that cannot make us any recompense...  
‘But suppose he will not be warmed, what then?’ is the reply.  
Continue to do your own part.  
‘What if he grow more perverse?’  
He is but procuring to you so much greater return,  
and shows you so much the greater imitator of Christ.  
For if loving one another was to be the characteristic of disciples  
consider how great an one loving one that hates us must be.  
For your Master loved those that hated Him, and called them to Him;  
and the weaker they were, the greater the care He showed them;  
and He cried and said, They that are whole need not a physician,  
but they that are sick. (Matt. ix. 12.)  
And He deemed publicans and sinners worthy of the same table with Him.  
And as great as was the dishonor wherewith the Jewish people treated Him,  
so great was the honor and concern He showed for them, yea, and much greater.”

Chrysostom urged his congregation to say:  
“Hate me as much as you may, I will not leave off loving you.”

After all, *this* is how Christ has welcomed you.  
He welcomed the weak and the helpless.  
He welcomed the poor and the miserable.

If the pattern of your life is so wrapped up in pleasing yourself,



serving your own interests,  
and pursuing your own pleasures,  
    that you simply don't have time to even think about this,  
then may think that you worship the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
but if you do not welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you,  
    if you have become so preoccupied with only loving "people like us"  
    then you have missed the point of the scriptures.

### **3. That the Gentiles Might Glorify God for His Mercy (15:8-13)**

After all, *Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness,  
in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs,  
and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.*

What was the problem that Paul was addressing in Romans 14?

The "weaker" brethren (Jewish Christians) were condemning those who ate meat  
(whether other Jewish Christians or Gentiles).

In other words, table fellowship was being broken.

Only "people like us" can eat together.

But what has Jesus done?

He came as a servant to the circumcised –  
in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs.

But what had God *promised* the patriarchs?

*That all nations would be blessed in Abraham's seed!*

There are three parts to the promise to Abraham:

the promise of the Land (which Paul said in Romans 4 speaks of the whole earth)

the promise of the Seed (which Paul says in Galatians 3 is Jesus)

and the promise that in the Seed, all nations will be blessed.

That is why Paul says that Jesus came as a servant to the circumcised for *two* reasons:

- 1) in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs  
(Jesus does not overturn the law – he fulfills it)
- 2) and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.

And to demonstrate this, Paul quotes four passages:

2 Samuel 22:50 (the song of David)

    where King David praises God among the Gentiles,

Deuteronomy 32:43 (the song of Moses)

    where Moses calls the Gentiles to rejoice *with Israel*,

Psalms 117 (which we sing regularly as our doxology)

    where the Gentiles are called to praise the Lord,

and Isaiah 11:10 (speaking of the Messiah – the root of Jesse, the Son of David)  
where the Gentiles hope in the Son of David.

Paul's point is simple:

You must welcome one another –  
You must receive one another (any fellow Christian) *into your homes,*  
*into your lives,*  
because Jesus has welcomed you.

We're not just talking about dinner parties and movie nights here.  
We're talking about a common way of thinking and knowing and doing.  
We're talking about a common way of life.

In good times, when everyone is employed,  
that may mean working together around the house,  
and working together in serving others in the community.  
In bad times (which may be upon us),  
that may mean inviting others to move in with you to weather the storm;  
it may mean looking for ways to provide work for those in need  
(and if you need help paying for that work,  
talk to the deacons!)

But the reason why you do this  
is because you *hope* in Jesus.

*In him will the Gentiles hope.*

Hope is what gets us up in the morning.  
It is the expectation that one of these days,  
things are going to get better!  
I'm not talking about the economy –  
at least, not the economy of this age!  
Our hope is that one day God will make all things right.  
And to “abound in hope” means that by the power of the Holy Spirit  
you live in the midst of the economy of this age,  
by the power of the economy of the age to come.  
In other words, hope is what fuels kingdom living.  
The reason why we live in the midst of this age by the standard of the age to come,  
is because the power of the age to come has broken into this age.

*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.*

This is God's work.  
He will do it.