

Romans 15 (1-7) – This is How to Help Each Other

These verses begin Paul's conclusion to the case he is making in Romans. Paul has spoken of practical application in chapters 12-14, and here he continues about how to keep the peace when there are different ideas about liberty and legalism and different backgrounds, etc. He doesn't dismiss them; he only points us to the primary things and the true center of any fellowship, which is Christ. There is the starting point. The principles Paul gives all flow from that. Even through this deals with strong and weak all these points apply to all of us in some way.

Vs.1-2 – Help by Bearing and Building

Help lift their burdens, not avoiding the weak (cf. Philippians 2:4). Bear with them doesn't mean to tolerate through grit teeth, or just let everything go and call that grace. It doesn't mean those who know they are weak have an entitlement attitude. Weak doesn't mean lazy (1 Thessalonians 5:9-15). It means we prioritize them not marginalize them. We are patient with them, not everyone runs the race at the same speed, but everyone must run the race. Not everyone has the want to as much as you do but we are to help them see it so that they will want it and be able to get it. Do not insist on your way of doing things, but be careful that you don't allow your neighbor to be confirmed in his weakness, you must encourage them to grow.

Help build their spiritual house. We need build them up not just ourselves up, to be edifying to them, encouraging them and enduring for their sakes. We see what Paul means by please ourselves from verse 1 because in verse 2 he says we please others by building them up, so to please ourselves means we would only be concerned about building ourselves up and not those who are having some trouble with the building process. We all have a part to play (1 Corinthians 10:33). For His good doesn't simply mean as he desires it means toward God (Galatians 1:10). When some have less, we do more; we do what it takes because everyone counts.

Vs.3-4 – Help by Interceding and Instructing

Psalm 69:9 – Christ stood in the gap as our ultimate intercessor. Hebrews 13:13 – now we are to also bear the reproach. Our first job is not to point out failures but to take it to God and pray for them. We identify with Christ which helps us to identify with others in their struggles. We get a burden for someone and we are to pray for them, we don't have to know all the details.

The scriptures are the source. Not just words to look at, words to live by. They are given to us for practical instruction, to give us patience and encouragement, that we may have hope. If we give them the bible we give them hope. How do we learn to do things the right way? It is by learning the bible rightly. This originally referred to the OT but now obviously applies to the entire bible. The scriptures are alive and relevant for today, both OT (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:11) and NT. Paul reminds us of this (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Some argue that this is only referring to the OT, but that isn't true, because by then most of the scriptures were already complete. Peter brings the Old and New Testaments together by saying that words of the Apostles were also authoritative (2 Peter 3:2), specifically referring to Paul's writings as scripture (2 Peter 3:15-16). Also 1 Timothy 5:18 quotes Luke 10:7, so the gospels are included. Everything needed for faith and practice, life and liberty in Christ, we have all we need in the scriptures (2 Peter 1:3-4).

Vs.5-6 – Help by Working and Worshipping

We have the scriptures, they reveal God's character, and God is the one who grants these things, this patience and encouragement and hope. Paul is praying, and so we see that these come also with prayer, but it is also with action; "live" "be likeminded, "unity with one another" – we act in faith that God will grant the grace. It's a long road and we will all need a lot of bridges. We have to work together and walk it out, to put the prayers to practice, we are all in different stages but together we form a net, a bridge. Paul prays that God would grant it, and they are instructed to go and do it. This unity and harmony doesn't mean no debating or no doctrine no pastors and no positions to take, it means we can take a stand together on the essentials of Christ. Unanimous about Christ – The most important thing to realize is that regardless of the rest of one's theology, our unity as Christians is around our mutual belief that God is Holy, we are sinners in need of a sacrifice, and that God has provided the means of righteousness, forgiveness and restoration thru Christ. God does the electing, but we are called to do some nominating also. We ought to be praying for God to save people, and go out and witness like He is going to answer our prayers. We are working toward a fuller understanding of Christ (Colossians 2:2). One voice means a vivid outward expression. We can always rejoice in the Lord.

Vs.7 – Help by Accepting

To welcome one another there has to BE a "one another". All accepting all – Acceptance is not approval of all they do, He wants them to all grow up (Ephesians 4:11-16). After all we have to lift build, pray, teach, bridge, etc. but Christ has to continue to do all that for us as well. As long as Christ is the foundation, it means accepting all the trials and tribulation that true fellowship will bring; and saying, knowing, and living that Christ is worth it.

As Christ has welcomed you –

Vs.1-4 – Christ bears burdens –

Vs.5-7 – Christ accepts brethren (Hebrews 2:11).

The Greek word for "welcome" is always in the middle voice in the NT which means the subject not only initiates the action but also participates in the results of that action. Paul is calling for a demonstrative, whole hearted attitude and action. Paul says continually draw one another to yourself, like Jesus does. Give them a warm welcome. Grant them access to your heart. Treat them with loving kindness. This is what gives God glory, fruitful fellowship.

No one is perfect except Him, and He let us in so we should let others in. Christ bears our weakness, He builds us up, He intercedes for us, He is our teacher, He is our promise, He is our bridge, He is our worship, and He will welcome us into His kingdom. Christ is not merely the model, He is the motive and thankfully, even when we fail He is still the Messiah. Jesus will take us even if no one else will.

We care for others because God cares for us. We help the weak, but we don't leave them in weakness we build them up, we intercede to God for them, we get involved with them and teach them the scriptures, we keep the peace and build bridges, we worship together and we accept them as brethren. If you believe in Jesus I believe in you. That is how we help each other.