

# UNASHAMED

A study of the book of Romans

I am not ashamed of the **GOSPEL**, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes. Romans 1:16

**November 28, 2021**  
**Romans 15:1-13**

## SCRIPTURE

**15** Now we who are strong have an obligation to bear the weaknesses of those without strength, and not to please ourselves. <sup>2</sup> Each one of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. <sup>3</sup> For even Christ did not please himself. On the contrary, as it is written, **The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.**<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>4</sup> For whatever was written in the past was written for our instruction, so that we may have hope through endurance and through the encouragement from the Scriptures. <sup>5</sup> Now may the God who gives<sup>[b]</sup> endurance and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, according to Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> so that you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ with one mind and one voice.

<sup>7</sup> Therefore welcome one another, just as<sup>[c]</sup> Christ also welcomed you, to the glory of God. <sup>8</sup> For I say that Christ became a servant of the circumcised<sup>[d]</sup> on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises to the fathers, <sup>9</sup> and so that Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy. As it is written,

**Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and I will sing praise to your name.**<sup>[e]</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Again it says, **Rejoice, you Gentiles, with his people!**<sup>[f]</sup> <sup>11</sup> And again, **Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles; let all the peoples praise him!**<sup>[g]</sup>

<sup>12</sup> And again, Isaiah says, **The root of Jesse will appear, the one who rises to rule the Gentiles; the Gentiles will hope in him.**<sup>[h]</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you believe so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

## COMMENTARY

**15:1-2.** The strong needed to bear the weaknesses of those without strength. Paul realized that the church would always have weak members. Spiritual growth does not happen at the same rate with all believers. This being the case, it was the responsibility of mature believers to bear the weaknesses of others. The literal meaning of verb rendered **bear** is “take up.” It can also mean “to put up with.” Here, the apostle called on mature believers to go beyond toleration of weak member’s attitudes and beliefs to a self-sacrificing commitment to take up their burdens. To bear their burdens likely meant to find ways to patiently help them with their more legalistic attitudes and practices even at the cost of personal sacrifice. Paul was urging the mature to be proactive in responding with patience, love, and sacrifice in ways that would help other Christians move beyond their weaknesses to a mature faith (see Gal. 6:1-2).

**15:3.** Paul pointed to Christ as the ultimate example of One who did not set out to please Himself, but was willing to put up with biting insults and criticisms. Paul drew from Psalm 69:9 to demonstrate that Jesus had borne insults that ultimately were aimed at God the Father. Similarly, the apostle made it clear that the ministry of stronger believers on behalf of weaker Christians would often go unappreciated by those being helped. Nevertheless, the ministry of bearing one another’s weaknesses needed to be done anyway.

**15:4.** In referring to Psalm 69:9, Paul reminded believers with robust faith that the Scriptures were written for their instruction, their hope, their endurance, and their encouragement. These four ministries of the Scriptures provided help for weaker Christians as well as stronger believers. By studying the examples of past people of God—some who showed strong faith; others who displayed weak faith—all Christians can gain practical instruction, encouragement, and endurance. Stronger Christians also could find hope that their work of helping others would not be in vain. Paul knew from personal experience that helping weaker Christians grow toward maturity was a slow and sometimes painful process. The Scriptures gave him strength to continue faithfully in this vital ministry to the churches.

**15:5-6.** Paul had exhorted stronger Christians to turn to the Scriptures for instruction, hope, endurance, and encouragement. He then commended them to God, who gives them endurance and encouragement. Paul knew that it was the God of the Scriptures who sustains the believer. The Scriptures are powerful because they are the words of the living God. Paul longed for Christians everywhere to live in harmony with one another. All Christians could live in harmony if they kept before them life's ultimate purpose: to glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul urged his readers never to forget that they were one body in Christ, designed individually and collectively to be a tribute to God.

**15:7-13.** This final section of verses begins with a summary statement followed by four illustrations from the Old Testament and concludes with a benediction. The summary statement Paul gives (vv. 7-9) is perhaps one of the most theologically dense statements in all of Paul's writing. Condensed in one statement is a summary of Romans 9-11, pointing out that God in Christ came as a servant to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs which resulted in mercy being extended to the Gentiles. Had not Christ taken on the form of a servant and gone first to the "lost sheep of Israel" (Matt. 10:6; 15:24; Rom. 1:16) in confirmation of the promises made to the patriarchs, the unfolding of the mercy of God to the Gentiles would not have occurred as we know it.

It was Christ's willingness to be led as a "lamb to the slaughter" (Isa. 53:7) that brought closure to the Old Testament messianic prophecies and paved the way for both Jews and Gentiles to be bound over to disobedience so that God might have mercy on them all (Rom. 11:32). Given the content of the Old Testament passages with which Paul is about to support his argument, all of which emphasize the inclusion of the Gentiles, it could be suggested that the primary problem in the Roman church was the Jews being exclusionary regarding Gentile believers. Paul may be saying to the Jews in the Roman church, "Be like Christ who, as a servant, completed the purposes of God for his life so that mercy might be extended to the Gentiles. You need to do the same thing toward the Gentiles in the church. Do not worry if they eat meat from the marketplace. Realize they have been brought into the same spiritual union with God that you have through the servanthood of Christ."

While Paul had been speaking to the "strong" in verses 1-6, he seems to broaden his appeal to the whole church beginning in verse 7 (Accept one another, then), suggesting an "if the shoe fits, wear it" approach. In verses 9-12 the shoe would likely fit best on the feet of Jewish believers who were not willing to act like Christ in serving their Gentile brethren.

Paul cites four Old Testament passages (2 Samuel 22:50, Deuteronomy 32:43, Psalm 117:1, Isaiah 11:10) illustrating that it was always God's intent for the Gentiles to be brought into the fold of God's love and mercy. This became possible when Christ came as the Jewish Messiah (came as a servant of the Jews) and died for the sins not only of Israel but of the whole world (1 John 2:2). Thus Christ's servanthood provided the

means whereby both Jews and Gentiles were unified in one body— Paul’s goal for the church in Rome.

Paul uses all of these verses to demonstrate that the Gentiles were not an afterthought in God’s plan, but were destined to inherit salvation through the instrumentality of Israel and her Messiah (see other references to the Gentiles in Pss. 47:1; 67:3-5; 96:7; 98:4; 100:1). In light of God’s plan from the beginning to bring Jews and Gentiles together to share in his blessings (Gen. 12:3), disunity and contention among believers in a given assembly is unacceptable. By not living together in unity, they become an affront to God’s purpose and plan for sending his Son as the Jewish Messiah.

Paul’s final benediction to them is a gentle one. What he is asking them to do is not easy— certainly not something to be accomplished in the power of human ability. Joy and peace are supernatural manifestations of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22), and any hope they have of learning to love those of a different racial and ethnic background than themselves can only come through him. Hope for the present—”Can I truly accept my brother or sister in Christ?”—and hope for the future—”Are my efforts going to be consummated in God’s final deliverance from all of life’s stresses and troubles?”—will only overflow in the believer as the believer overflows with the Spirit.

## **MAIN POINT**

If we truly love one another as Christ calls us to, then we will think of others instead of only ourselves, and they, too, will see that they can find redemption in Jesus and be grafted into His family.

## **INTRODUCTION**

*As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.*

### **What’s one way we let Christmas become all about us?**

### **Why do you think we are prone to do that?**

Now that we’re in the Christmas season, we’ve probably already been reminded how easy it is to lose sight of what it’s really all about. We all know deep down that being the best, having the most, and competing with others is far from the true meaning of Christmas, but we still tend to think of ourselves more often than others. In the passage we’ll study today, Paul urged Christians to consider others’ needs above their own. We’ll see how God wants to use that change in attitude to bring redemption in Jesus Christ to all kinds of people and graft them into His family.

## **UNDERSTANDING**

*Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.*

- *ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ ROMANS 15:1-4.*

### **Why do you think Paul addressed those who were strong? Why did he include himself?**

Spiritual growth does not happen at the same rate with all believers. This being the case, it was the responsibility of mature believers to bear the weaknesses of others. Yet what exactly did Paul have in mind in using this terminology? The literal meaning of the verb rendered “bear” is “take up.” It can also mean, “to put up with.” Here, the apostle called on mature believers to go beyond toleration of weak member’s attitudes and beliefs to a self-sacrificing commitment to take up their burdens. To bear their burdens likely meant to find ways to patiently help them with their more legalistic attitudes and practices, even at the cost of personal sacrifice.

Was Paul teaching that mature Christians were duty-bound to put up with any and every irrational expectation a weaker Christian might express and do so indefinitely? No. Paul was urging the mature to be proactive in responding with patience, love, and sacrifice in ways that would help other Christians move beyond their weaknesses to a mature faith (Galatians 6:1-2).

### **Why are we more prone to put others first if we focus on pleasing God?**

Psalms 69 prophesied the abuse Jesus would endure because He cared about God’s will rather His comfort. Paul quoted Psalm 69:9 in Romans 15:3 to make the point that believers should endure inconveniences for the sake of other believers.

### **What are some practical ways you could help bear the weaknesses of other believers?**

### **When have you sought to help another believer grow in faith but failed to see that growth materialize? When this has happened, what Scriptures have helped you keep following Christ’s example?**

Paul appealed to Christ, who did not set out to please Himself. In every instance, Jesus sought to serve by God’s standard of sacrificial service (see Mark 10:45; 1 Corinthians 10:33–11:1; 2 Corinthians 8:9; Philippians 2:5-8). Likewise, it is a characteristic trait of mature Christians that they seek the growth and benefit of others over self-concern. Such a life speaks well of God and gives glory to Him. We see this even more in the following verses.

- ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ ROMANS 15:5-7.

**Why do we need endurance and encouragement to live in harmony with other Christians? Where do we get that endurance and encouragement?**

Paul exhorted stronger Christians to turn to the Scriptures for instruction, hope, endurance, and encouragement. He then commended them to God, who gives them endurance and encouragement. Paul knew it was the God of the Scriptures who sustains the believer. The Scriptures are powerful because they are the words of the living God.

**It's evident that Paul cared deeply about how God's children relate to one another. Why is that such a big deal? How would we live if it was truly a big deal to us as well?**

**How can believers have a united mind and voice when personalities and preferences are so different?**

**What is the ultimate purpose of believers living in harmony? Why do believers honor God when they live in harmony with one another?**

Paul longed for Christians everywhere to live in harmony with one another. This did not mean they would live in lock-step uniformity on all issues. Christian unity can be experienced even when believers have varying opinions on secondary matters. By having a clear conscience before the Lord as to their opinions but living according to the principle of Christlike love in their relationships, church members can live in harmony. A unified perspective centered on Christ Jesus as the model of Christian conduct results in unity in the church.

All Christians could live in harmony if they kept before them life's ultimate purpose: to glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul urged his readers never to forget that they were one body in Christ, designed individually and collectively to be a tribute to God. As the body of Christ, Christians glorify God when they live together in a practical, functional unity. Churches filled with mature Christians reflect well on God as they display a united mind and voice. There can be no doubt this unity includes a commitment to the fundamentals of the Christian faith—the sound doctrine delivered once and for all to the church (see 1 Timothy 4:6; Titus 2:1; Jude 3). Yet it also means being willing to come together, despite differences in secondary matters, to unite our hearts and voices in praise to God.

**Looking at verse 7, what do you think it means to welcome someone? How did Jesus welcome us? How can we be like Jesus when it comes to welcoming others?**

The word “welcome” presses the idea of “wholehearted acceptance.” If Jesus has accepted someone, can we refuse to take them in as a Christian brother or sister? Our attitude to others must flow from the transformation Jesus achieved in us.

- *ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ ROMANS 15:8-13.*

### **What two purposes of the Messiah’s ministry did Paul identify in verses 8 and 9?**

Paul outlined a twofold purpose for the mission of the Messiah in these verses. First, He was to be a “servant of the circumcised,” the Jewish people. Jesus is a Jewish Messiah, meaning He fulfilled all of God’s promises to the Jews and met the requirements of the Jewish law, which made Him the perfect sacrifice to redeem mankind from sin. The second purpose Paul pointed out was that Jesus would be the mechanism through which God would extend His mercy to the Gentiles. Paul then used four Old Testament quotes to support this claim.

**What would you say is the central claim Paul made from Old Testament evidence? See 2 Samuel 22:50; Deuteronomy 32:43; Psalm 117:1; and Isaiah 11:10 for context.**

**What comfort should this bring to someone who feels they are outside of the reach of God’s plan?**

From the beginning of time, God’s plan has always included the Gentiles. His blessings to the Jews were not meant to stay there—they were to be extended to the Gentiles. Quoting well-known spiritual leaders from God’s people, Paul hoped to prove through the testimony of Scripture that God has a heart for all people and has extended His purpose to the Gentiles. For us, this is a clear signal that God welcomes all people. Regardless of race, gender, age, ethnicity, or any other identifying factor, God accepts all people who repent of their sins and trust in the gospel.

We can have hope because we know we have peace with God. We can find true and lasting joy and peace through the life of Jesus Christ being made effective in our lives through His Spirit. The Spirit breaks down boundaries and unites us in a new family whose membership is founded only in Jesus’s blood.

## **APPLICATION**

*Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.*

**Why is it important for us to even discuss the ideas of thinking of others, being the body of Christ to one another, and getting along at this time of year?**

**Is Summit a place where anyone can be grafted in? How can we communicate that this Christmas season? How can we continually cultivate this type of atmosphere throughout the year?**

**Read John 13:34-35. How might thinking deeply on what Christ has done for us cause us to truly love others?**

## **PRAYER**

Praise God for being the Savior of all people. Ask God to help you live lives characterized by love for God and love for others. Pray that God would show you how to think of others instead of yourself, and ask God to give you opportunities to demonstrate love to them so that they might find the grace and peace of the gospel of Jesus this Christmas season.