SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Romans 15

The God of Hope and the Road to Spain — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-09 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

Christ did not please Himself, so the strong carry the weak and the church receives one another until Jew and Gentile praise God with one voice. The same Christ sends His gospel to the edge of the map, and the God of perseverance, hope and peace goes with those who carry it.

00 The Text

ROMANS 15 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves.

2 Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification.

3 For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "THE REPROACHES OF THOSE WHO REPROACHED YOU FELL ON ME."

4 For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

5 Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus,

6 so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

7 Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.

8 For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers,

9 and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy; as it is written, "THEREFORE I WILL GIVE PRAISE TO YOU AMONG THE GENTILES, AND I WILL SING TO YOUR NAME."

10 Again he says, "REJOICE, O GENTILES, WITH HIS PEOPLE."

11 And again, "PRAISE THE LORD ALL YOU GENTILES, AND LET ALL THE PEOPLES PRAISE HIM."

12 Again Isaiah says, "THERE SHALL COME THE ROOT OF JESSE, AND HE WHO ARISES TO RULE OVER THE GENTILES, IN HIM SHALL THE GENTILES HOPE."

13 Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

14 And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.

15 But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God,

16 to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

17 Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God.

18 For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed,

19 in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

20 And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, so that I would not build on another man's foundation;

21 but as it is written, "THEY WHO HAD NO NEWS OF HIM SHALL SEE, AND THEY WHO HAVE NOT HEARD SHALL UNDERSTAND."

22 For this reason I have often been prevented from coming to you;

23 but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you

24 whenever I go to Spain—for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while—

25 but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints.

26 For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.

27 Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things.

28 Therefore, when I have finished this, and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs, I will go on by way of you to Spain.

29 I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.

30 Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me,

31 that I may be rescued from those who are disobedient in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints;

32 so that I may come to you in joy by the will of God and find refreshing rest in your company.

33 Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

Marked in the text

- **v1** "we who are strong" — Time / place / contrast
- **v1** "bear the weaknesses of those without strength" — Command / instruction
- **v1** "not just please ourselves" — Sin / warning
- **v2** "please his neighbor for his good" — Command / instruction
- **v3** "even Christ did not please Himself" — God — His character & actions
- **v4** "perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures" — Promise / blessing
- **v4** "hope" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v5** "the God who gives perseverance and encouragement" — God — His character & actions
- **v6** "with one voice glorify the God and Father" — Command / instruction
- **v7** "accept one another" — Command / instruction
- **v7** "just as Christ also accepted us" — God — His character & actions
- **v8** "a servant to the circumcision" — God — His character & actions
- **v8** "to confirm the promises given to the fathers" — Promise / blessing
- **v9** "glorify God for His mercy" — God — His character & actions
- **v9** "Gentiles" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v12** "THE ROOT OF JESSE" — Promise / blessing
- **v13** "the God of hope" — God — His character & actions
- **v13** "all joy and peace in believing" — Promise / blessing
- **v13** "the power of the Holy Spirit" — God — His character & actions
- **v16** "my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable" — Promise / blessing
- **v18** "what Christ has accomplished through me" — God — His character & actions
- **v19** "from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum" — Time / place / contrast

- **v20** “not where Christ was already named” — Time / place / contrast
- **v24** “whenever I go to Spain” — Time / place / contrast
- **v26** “a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem” — Promise / blessing
- **v27** “they are indebted to them” — Command / instruction
- **v29** “in the fullness of the blessing of Christ” — Promise / blessing
- **v30** “strive together with me in your prayers” — Command / instruction
- **v31** “those who are disobedient in Judea” — Sin / warning
- **v33** “the God of peace” — God — His character & actions

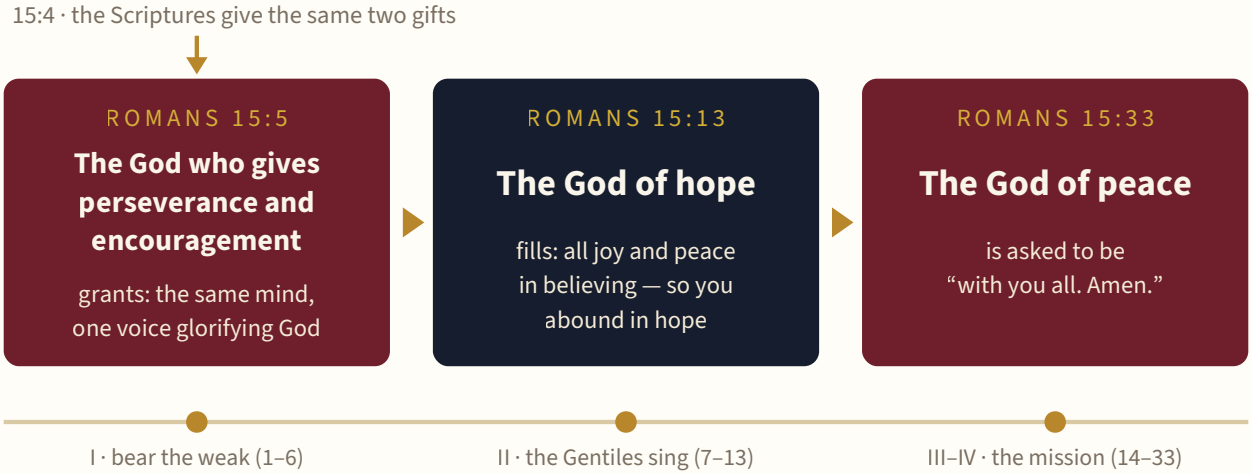
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ROMANS 15:4

"For whatever was written in earlier times was ☆ written for our instruction, so that through ☆ perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have ⟲ hope."

FIGURE · THREE NAMES FOR GOD IN ONE CHAPTER



Each movement ends in a prayer that names God by what the church needs: perseverance and encouragement for the quarrel at the table, hope for Jew and Gentile together, peace for an apostle walking into danger.

Setting. Paul is finishing the strong-and-weak section that began at 14:1 ("Now accept the one who is weak in faith") and then opening the letter's farewell. He writes from Corinth, near the end of his third journey (Acts 20:2–3), with a collection from Macedonia and Achaia in hand for the poor saints in Jerusalem (vv25–26). He has never been to Rome. He wants to come, and then go on to Spain.

Structure:

- vv1–6 — **the strong bear the weak:** we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves (v1); please your neighbor for his good, to his edification (v2); "even Christ did not please Himself" — Psalm 69:9 (v3); the Scriptures were written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and encouragement we might have hope (v4); prayer to the God who gives perseverance and encouragement for one mind and one voice (vv5–6).
- vv7–13 — **accept one another; the Gentiles sing:** accept one another as Christ accepted us, to the glory of God (v7); Christ became a servant to the circumcision to confirm the promises to the fathers, and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy (vv8–9a); four Old Testament quotations — Psalm 18:49, Deuteronomy 32:43, Psalm 117:1, Isaiah 11:10 (vv9b–12); prayer to the God of hope (v13).

- vv14–21 — **a priest of the gospel:** "I am convinced that you are full of goodness" (v14); I wrote boldly to remind you, because of grace (v15); a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable (v16); I boast only in what Christ has accomplished through me, by word and deed, signs and wonders, the Spirit's power (vv17–19a); from Jerusalem round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel (v19b); my aim — not where Christ was already named — Isaiah 52:15 (vv20–21).
- vv22–33 — **the road west:** this is why I have been prevented from coming (v22); now no more room here; on my way to Spain I will see you (vv23–24); but first Jerusalem, with the contribution from Macedonia and Achaia (vv25–27); then by way of you to Spain (vv28–29); strive together with me in prayer — rescue in Judea, acceptance by the saints, a joyful arrival (vv30–32); "Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen." (v33).

Repeated words, with counts (NASB95): "Gentiles" ×10 — vv9 (twice), 10, 11, 12 (twice), 16 (twice), 18, 27; "Christ" ×12 — vv3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 29, 30; "God" ×12 — vv5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, 15, 16, 17, 30, 32, 33; "hope" ×5 — vv4, 12, 13 (twice), 24; "please / pleased" ×5 — vv1, 2, 3, 26, 27; "written" ×6 — vv3, 4 (twice), 9, 15, 21 ("as it is written" ×3 — vv3, 9, 21); "Spirit" ×4 — vv13, 16, 19, 30; "Jerusalem" ×4 — vv19, 25, 26, 31; "accept / accepted / acceptable" ×4 — vv7 (twice), 16, 31; "servant / serving / service / minister" ×6 — vv8, 16 (twice), 25, 27, 31; "saints" ×3 — vv25, 26, 31; "power" ×3 — vv13, 19 (twice); "perseverance" and "encouragement" ×2 each — vv4, 5; "Spain" ×2 — vv24, 28.

Contrasts: pleasing ourselves (v1) ⟷ Christ did not please Himself (v3). The strong ⟷ those without strength (v1). The circumcision (v8) ⟷ the Gentiles (v9). Truth of God for Israel (v8) ⟷ mercy for the Gentiles (v9). Where Christ was already named ⟷ those who had no news of Him (vv20–21). Spiritual things ⟷ material things (v27). The disobedient in Judea ⟷ the saints in Jerusalem (v31). Paul's plan (Jerusalem → Rome → Spain) ⟷ what happened (Jerusalem → arrest → Rome in chains, Acts 21–28).

Shape of the chapter: two movements of teaching that each end in a prayer-wish (vv5–6, v13), then two movements of travel that end in a request for prayer and a benediction (vv30–33). Three names for God mark the stops: the God who gives perseverance and encouragement (v5), the God of hope (v13), the God of peace (v33). The circle widens — one weak brother, one church of Jew and Gentile, one apostle's field from Jerusalem to Illyricum, and finally Spain.

Chapter theme (my words): Because Christ did not please Himself, I carry the weak and receive my brother, and Jew and Gentile praise God together. The same gospel pushes out to people who have never heard, carried by men who need each other's prayers and trust God with the road.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ROMANS 15:16

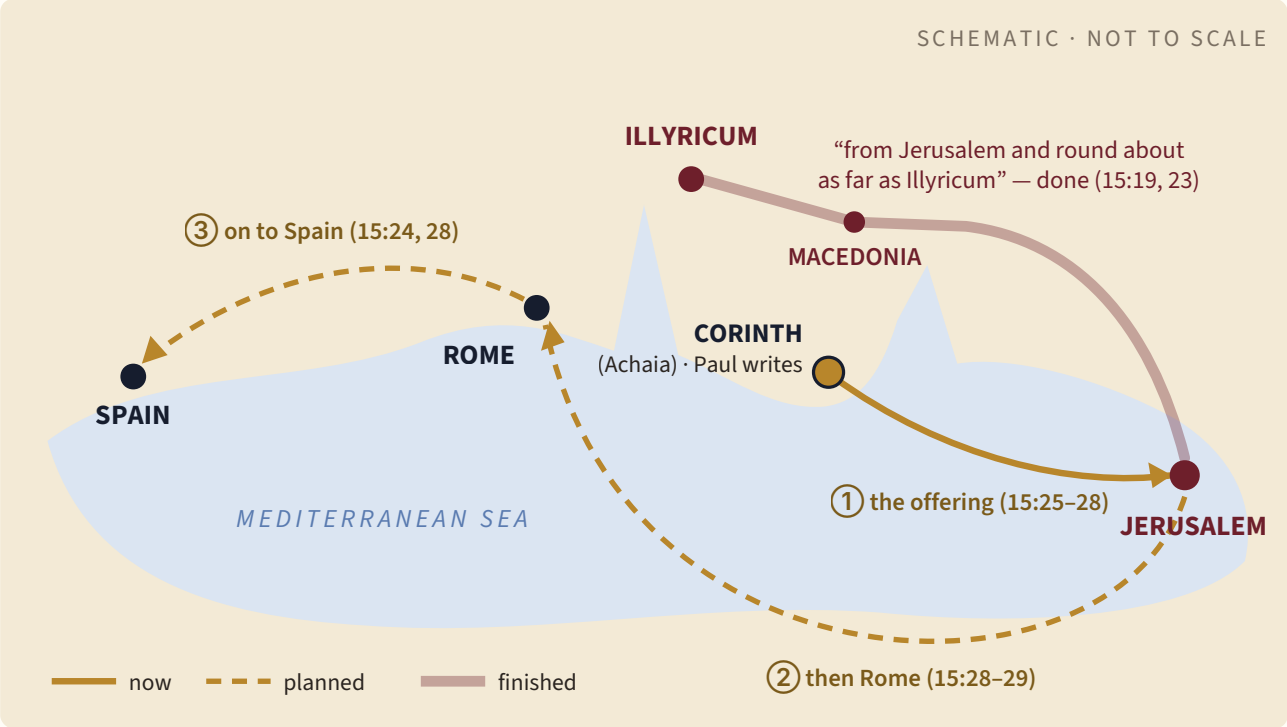
"to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit."

FIGURE · FOUR WITNESSES: THE GENTILES PRAISE GOD (15:9–12)



Paul calls witnesses from every part of the Hebrew Bible — the Writings, the Law, the Writings again, the Prophets — and the chain ends on the word "hope," which verse 13 turns into a prayer.

FIGURE · PAUL'S ROAD WEST — SCHEMATIC MAP (15:19–29)



Read the solid line first: from Corinth Paul goes east to Jerusalem with the offering; only then the dashed road to Rome and Spain. The shaded arc is the work he calls finished. In the event he reached Rome in chains (Acts 21–28).

Who are "the strong" and "the weak"? Paul counts himself among the strong (v1, "we who are strong") — those whose faith lets them eat anything and treat every day alike (14:2, 5); the weak are believers whose conscience still binds them to food laws and holy days. Guzik: the call is not merely to tolerate them but to bear them *up* and help them grow strong — without letting the weakest conscience set the agenda. Sproul sets v2 beside Galatians 1:10: man-pleasing that compromises the gospel is a vice; pleasing a neighbor for his good is a virtue.

Why Psalm 69? Paul proves that Christ did not please Himself by quoting a psalm of the righteous sufferer — "the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me" (Ps 69:9). The first half of that verse, "zeal for Your house has consumed me," is what the disciples remembered when Jesus cleansed the temple (John 2:17). Sproul reads the psalm as messianic: the insults aimed at God landed on Christ. Henry: "The self-denial of our Lord Jesus is the best argument against the selfishness of Christians."

Why the Old Testament still matters (v4). "Whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction." Spurgeon: "The Old Testament is not outworn; apostles learned from it." The same two gifts — perseverance and encouragement — come "of the Scriptures" (v4) and from God (v5). Henry's picture: the Scripture is the conduit-pipe, God is the fountain-head.

Christ the servant of the circumcision (vv8–9). Christ came first as a servant (*diakonos*) to Israel, to prove God true and confirm the promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; the second purpose was that the Gentiles would glorify God for mercy. Sproul: the Gentiles' salvation does not cancel God's word to Israel but confirms it. Spurgeon: "Let us never forget that he came to those whom we are apt to forget." Henry: by sending Jewish believers to their own Scriptures, Paul "labours to qualify their dislike of the Gentiles."

The four witnesses (vv9–12). Paul quotes the Writings (Ps 18:49 = 2 Sam 22:50; Ps 117:1), the Law (Deut 32:43) and the Prophets (Isa 11:10). The progression: Messiah praises God among the nations; the nations rejoice with Israel; all the peoples praise; the nations hope in the Root of Jesse. Isaiah 11:10 is quoted from the Greek Old Testament ("in Him the nations will hope"; the Hebrew says the nations "will resort to" Him). The last word is hope, and v13 prays to "the God of hope."

"Ministering as a priest" (v16). Paul uses temple words — *leitourgos*, *hierourgeō*, *prosphora* — but the altar is the gospel and the offering is the converted Gentiles, sanctified by the Spirit. Sproul and Spurgeon both stress what Paul does not say: the New Testament never makes a minister a sacrificing priest, because Christ's sacrifice is finished. Henry: "now the Gentiles are made priests unto God."

Illyricum and "fully preached" (v19). Illyricum was the Roman province on the east shore of the Adriatic (roughly modern Albania to Croatia). Acts never records Paul there; he may have reached its edge while in Macedonia (Acts 20:1–2). "Fully preached" means the gospel is planted across that arc, not that every person has heard. (Guzik: "Illyricum is modern Yugoslavia and Albania.")

Did Paul reach Spain? — the teachers differ. Guzik: "we have reason to believe that Paul did in fact make it to Spain." Sproul: "Whether Paul ever got to Spain, we do not know." Henry: it is not certain, and "many of the best expositors think he did not." A late-first-century letter from Rome (1 Clement 5) says Paul reached the farthest limits of the west — tradition, not Scripture. What Scripture does say: he reached Rome, in chains, and preached there "unhindered" for two years (Acts 28:30–31).

The collection (vv25–28). The gift is called *koinōnia*, fellowship. The Gentiles owe it because they shared Israel's spiritual blessings — Sproul: they knew they were "the wild olive branch that was grafted into the root of Israel" (11:17–18). Paul delivered it (Acts 24:17, "to bring alms to my nation").

Were Paul's prayers answered (vv30–32)? He asked three things: rescue from the disobedient in Judea, acceptance of his service by the saints, and a joyful arrival in Rome. Acts 21–28: the brethren in Jerusalem received him gladly (21:17), he was rescued from a mob and a murder plot (21:30–32; 23:12–24), and he reached Rome — as a prisoner. Spurgeon: the first two were granted and the third came differently; "pray for a blessing, and leave the way of its coming to the good Lord who knoweth all things." Guzik: "answered, though not in the manner they expected."

Word study (Greek):

- **bear — *bastazō* (G941):** to lift and carry a load; the verb of carrying the cross (John 19:17) and of Galatians 6:2.
- **please — *areskō* (G700):** to please, to seek another's approval or good; "Christ did not please Himself" (v3).
- **edification — *oikodomē* (G3619):** building up, the work of a builder.
- **perseverance — *hypomonē* (G5281):** endurance under a load; vv4, 5.
- **encouragement — *paraklēsis* (G3874):** strengthening by one called alongside; vv4, 5.
- **with one accord — *homothymadon* (G3661):** with one passion; ten times in Acts, here only outside it.
- **accept — *proslambanō* (G4355):** to take to oneself, welcome into home and friendship; 14:1, 3; 15:7 twice.
- **servant — *diakonos* (G1249):** table-servant; Christ the servant of the circumcision (v8).
- **confirm — *bebaioō* (G950):** to make firm, ratify (v8).
- **root — *rhiza* (G4491):** the Root of Jesse, Messiah from David's line (v12; Rev 5:5; 22:16).
- **hope — *elpis* / *elpizō* (G1680 / G1679):** confident expectation; the last word of v12, the theme of v13.
- **minister — *leitourgos* (G3011):** a public servant in sacred service (v16; 13:6; Heb 8:2).

- **ministering as a priest — *hierourgeō* (G2418):** to perform sacred rites; only here in the NT.
- **offering — *prosphora* (G4376):** what is brought to the altar; here the Gentiles themselves.
- **fully preached — *plēroō* (G4137):** to fill, fulfill — "fulfilled the gospel."
- **Illyricum — *Illyrikon* (G2437):** the Adriatic province; named only here.
- **aspired — *philotimeomai* (G5389):** to love honor, make it one's ambition (Rom 15:20; 2 Cor 5:9; 1 Thess 4:11).
- **contribution — *koinōnia* (G2842):** fellowship, partnership, sharing.
- **minister (in material things) — *leitourgeō* (G3008):** the verb of sacred service, used of the Gentiles' gift (v27).
- **put my seal — *sphragizō* (G4972):** to seal, authenticate; Paul certifies the gift (v28).
- **strive together — *synagōnizomai* (G4865):** to contend alongside; only here; root of "agony."

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **The strong carry, not just tolerate.** *Bastazō* is a shoulder word — the cross, the burden, the weak brother.
2. **"Even Christ did not please Himself."** A quarrel about food is answered with Psalm 69 and the cross.
3. **Two gifts, two sources.** Perseverance and encouragement come from the Scriptures (v4) and from God (v5) — the pipe and the fountain.
4. **A mob's word made holy.** *Homothymadon* describes the praying church and the mobs of Acts; Paul asks for one accord in worship.
5. **Receiving a brother is worship.** Sproul: "When I receive you, I am not just being kind to you. … I am glorifying God."
6. **The whole Old Testament votes.** Law, Prophets and Writings call the Gentiles to praise, and the chain ends on "hope."
7. **Peace is joy resting.** Spurgeon: "Peace is joy resting, and joy is peace dancing."
8. **A priest whose altar is the gospel.** The only offering in v16 is people sanctified by the Spirit.
9. **A gift is fellowship you can count.** The collection is *koinōnia*, and the Gentiles' giving is *leitourgeō* — sacred service.
10. **The prayer was answered by another road.** Paul came to Rome in joy — and in chains.

Cross-references: Ps 18:49; 69:9; 117:1; 2 Sam 22:50; Deut 32:43; Isa 11:1, 10; 49:6; 52:15; John 2:17; 14:16; 19:17; Acts 19:21; 20:1–3; 21:17–36; 23:12–24; 24:17; 28:30–31; Rom 1:10–16; 11:17–18; 12:1; 14:1–23; 16:1, 20, 23; 1 Cor 16:1–4; 2 Cor 5:9; 8:9, 20–21; 9:12–13; Gal 2:10; 6:2; Phil 2:5–7; Heb 8:2.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ROMANS 15:7

"Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God."

Command to obey — "Bear the weaknesses of those without strength." I am not called to put up with the weak brother; I am called to put him on my shoulders. There is a man in our group whose struggle wears me out. This week I will call him, sit with him and carry part of his load instead of waiting for him to get stronger first. Strength that only serves itself is not Christian strength.

Sin to confess — pleasing myself. "Even Christ did not please Himself." I confess how much of my day is arranged around my comfort, my preferences, my way of doing things — even in ministry. Christ took the reproaches meant for God. I can take an inconvenience meant for my brother.

Command to obey — "Accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us." Christ did not receive me because I was perfect. He received me as a stranger, an enemy, a prodigal. So I cannot set a higher bar for the men I disciple — the man fresh out of prison, the man on his third try at sobriety, the brother whose politics or past make me uneasy — than Christ set for me.

Promise to trust — "the God of hope." The quotations end on hope and the prayer starts there: God fills with joy and peace "in believing," and I abound in hope "by the power of the Holy Spirit." Not by working, not by feeling. For the men I serve, hope is often the first thing addiction and prison take away. This verse says God gives it back, and that He gives it in overflowing measure.

Example to follow — Paul's ambition and Paul's prayer request. Paul had a holy ambition to go where Christ was not named, and he was humble enough to ask strangers to wrestle in prayer for him. I want both: a heart for the man who has never really heard, and the humility to say to my brothers, "Pray for me — I'm walking into something hard."

Trust to practice — leave the road to God. Paul asked to come to Rome in joy. He came in chains — and preached there unhindered for two years. God answered, by a road Paul would not have picked. I am praying about things in my own life right now; I will pray specifically, like Paul, and leave the way of the answer to God.

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. Who is the "weak" brother in your life right now — the man whose conscience, habits or struggles make him hard to carry? What would it look like this week to bear him up rather than just put up with him? (15:1–2; Gal 6:2) *Bastazō is a shoulder word: Christ carried the cross, and we carry each other's loads.*
2. Paul answers a quarrel over food with the cross: "even Christ did not please Himself." Where are you insisting on your own liberty, preference or comfort in a way Christ never would? (15:3; Ps 69:9; Phil 2:5–7) *Henry: His whole life was a self-denying, self-displeasing life.*

3. Verse 4 says the Old Testament was written for our instruction so that we might have hope. What Old Testament passage has given you perseverance or encouragement in a hard season? (15:4–5) *The Scriptures are the conduit-pipe; God is the fountain-head.*
4. "Accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us." How did Christ accept you — and what does that standard say about the brother you are slow to accept? (15:7; 14:1) *Christ did not receive us because we were perfect.*
5. Paul made his ambition to preach where Christ was not named. Who around you — at work, on your street, on the yard, in your family — has never really heard? (15:20–21; Isa 52:15) *Philotimeomai: a holy love of honor, aimed at the unreached.*
6. Paul asked a church he had never met to "strive together" with him in prayer, and God answered by a road he would not have chosen. What are you praying for that you need to leave "the way of its coming" to God? (15:30–32; Acts 28:30–31) *Spurgeon: pray for a blessing, and leave the way of its coming to the good Lord.*

Worship. Four voices from the Law, the Prophets and the Writings, and one song: the nations praise the God of Israel for His mercy. I was one of those Gentiles with "no news of Him." Someone carried the gospel west until it reached me. Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles — and let all the peoples praise Him.

Prayer. God who gives perseverance and encouragement — give me strong shoulders and a soft heart for the weak. Lord Jesus, You did not please Yourself; take the selfishness out of my strength. God of hope, fill me and the men I walk with with all joy and peace in believing, until we overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Give me Paul's ambition for those who have never heard, and his humility to ask for prayer. And God of peace, be with us all. Amen.

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