

ROMANS

Chapter 15

The Example of Christ

We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. 2 Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. 3 For 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 former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. 5 May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, 6 that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 7 Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

Ch 15 Luther: “In chapter 15 [Paul] sets up Christ as an example: we are to tolerate also those other weak ones who fail in other ways, in open sins or in unpleasing habits. We are not to cast them off, but to bear with them until they too grow better. For so Christ has done with us, and still does every day; he bears with our many faults and bad habits, and with all our imperfections, and helps us constantly. (TLSB)

“Then, at the end, he prays for them, praises them, and commends them to God. He speaks of his own office and of his preaching, and asks them kindly for a contribution to the poor at Jerusalem. All that he speaks of or deals with is pure love” (AE 35:379). (TLSB)

15:1 *We who are strong.* Paul identifies himself with the strong Christians, those whose personal convictions allow them more freedom than the weak. (CSB)

The strong, like Paul, grasp the extent of their freedom; the weak are still uncertain (14:14). (TLSB)

to bear. Not merely to tolerate or put up with but to uphold lovingly. (CSB)

failings. Not sins, since in the matters under discussion there is no clear guidance in Scripture. (CSB)

Inadequate recognition of freedoms in Christ. (TLSB)

not to please ourselves. Not that a Christian should never please himself, but that he should not insist on doing what he wants without regard to the scruples of other Christians. (CSB)

Paul urges us to use and, if necessary, give up our freedoms in order to serve others (14:13–23). (TLSB)

15:3 Ps 69, the third most quoted in the NT, is a significant messianic psalm. Jesus suffered the reproaches we deserve from God because of our sins. On the cross, He also bore the judgmental and harmful actions we impose on fellow believers. (TLSB)

Christ did not please himself. He came to do the will of the Father, not his own will. This involved suffering and even death (see Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45; 1Co 10:33–11:1; 2Co 8:9; Php 2:5–8). (CSB)

The reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me. In the psalm quoted (69:9) “you” refers to God and “me” refers to the righteous sufferer, whom Paul identifies with Christ. The quotation serves to show how Christ did not please himself, but voluntarily bore man’s hostility toward God. (CSB)

15:4 Here Paul defends his application of Ps 69:9 to Christ. In so doing, he states a great truth concerning the purpose of Scripture: It was written for our instruction, so that as we patiently endure we might be encouraged to hold fast our hope in Christ (see 1Co 10:6, 11). (CSB)

for whatever was written – This means the entire OT which pointed ahead to Jesus which would give them hope. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

OT is still God’s teaching for us. (TLSB)

whatever instruction – didaskalia – This often means Christian doctrine. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

through endurance – Literally, to “remain under,” the message of God’s mercy given in Scripture. (TLSB)

have hope – Means specific hope: the Christian faith. It includes both the subjective hope in our hearts and the object of hope – God’s promise to provide salvation on the last day. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

Scripture grants blessings that never disappoint (5:5). “When this consolation and hope [of salvation] are weakened or entirely removed by Scripture, it is certain that [the Scripture] is understood and explained contrary to the Holy Spirit’s will and meaning” (FC SD XI 92). (TLSB)

15:5-7 Paul’s prayer for the Roman Christians summarizes his hope for how they will respond to the entire Letter. Paul makes clear that the specific unity he seeks to reinforce is between Jew and Gentile. (TLSB)

15:5 *such harmony with one another.* † Not that believers should all come to the same conclusions on the matters of conscience discussed above, but that differences in these matters should not be allowed to destroy basic unity. (CSB)

Believers differ in many ways (12:4) but are united in Christ. (TLSB)

This means that when we do things to the pleasure of Christ unity will take place because we are emptied of our self and Christ totally fills us. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

in accord with Christ Jesus – Have His attitude; cf Php 2:1-11. (TLSB)

15:6 *together* – omothumadon – To have the same goal or purpose. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 1)

with one voice - This is a united confession like we do in worship with our confession of sins, creeds, doxology, hymns, and prayers. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 1)

Despite any difference and “quarrel over opinions” (14:1) we may have, believers are one Body in Christ (cf 12:4–5) and are called to praise God together. (TLSB)

glorify the God – These outlooks and actions of love and edification toward each other have an ultimate purpose: That the Roma Christians give praise to God. “Praise,” “honor,” “magnify” is the necessary meaning of glorify when man is the subject and God is the object.

15:7 *welcome one another* – proslambanesthe – To receive one another. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 1)

Romans 14:1-23 spoke of “welcoming” into the fellowship in the matter of a specific problem; here it is the topic of a general appeal to all. The ensuing verses show that the spectrum of Jewish Christians to Gentile Christians is in view, and in chapter 16 will attach names of flesh and blood people to “each other.” The Greek word of “receive is used in a similar sense in Philemon 17 and Acts 18:26. (CC)

as Christ welcomed you. See 14:3, 4, 15. (CSB)

the glory of God –Basic thrust of Christianity. Christ has taken us to Himself despite our sins (cf 14:3). In response, believers display that same attitude of mercy toward one another (cf Eph 4:32. All this brings glory to God. (TLSB)

15:1–7 Concludes the section begun in 14:1. Paul has dealt with quarrels over opinions and here resolves them. There are strong and weak among us in the Church. We should follow Christ’s example of accepting and striving to please others. Despite your sin and weaknesses, Christ bore the reproaches your sins deserved and welcomed you into God’s family (15:7). • Dear Father, lead me into Your Word, where I receive endurance, encouragement, and hope from You. Empower me then to welcome others, especially those weak in faith. Amen. (TLSB)

Christ the Hope of Jews and Gentiles

8 For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, 9 and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, “Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name.” 10 And again it is said, “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.” 11 And again, “Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him.”12 And again Isaiah says, “The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope.” 13 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.

15:8 *Christ has become a servant to the circumcised.* Clearly revealed in his earthly ministry. He was sent to the Jewish people and largely limited his ministry to them (see Mt 15:24). God gave a special priority, so far as the gospel is concerned, to the Jews (see 3:1–8). (CSB)

Jesus was sent to the lost sheep of Israel (Mt 15:24); Paul also asserts “to the Jew first” (1:16). (TLSB)

Christ was sent to the Jews which fulfilled the promises to the patriarchs. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 1)

Matthew 15:24 “He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.”

Romans 1:16 “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.”

promises made to the patriarchs. The covenant promises made to Abraham (Ge 12:1–3; 17:7; 18:19; 22:18), Isaac (Ge 26:3–4) and Jacob (Ge 28:13–15; 46:2–4). (CSB)

The OT promises to Abraham and Israel are fulfilled in Jesus. Vv 9–12 confirm the promise to all nations. (TLSB)

15:9 *praise you among the Gentiles.* God’s redemptive work in and for Israel had in view the redemption of the Gentiles (see Ge 12:3). They would both see God’s mighty and gracious acts for his people and hear the praises of God’s people as they celebrated what God had done for them (a common theme in the Psalms; see Paul’s quotations in vv. 9b–12 and note on Ps 9:1). Thus they would come to know the true God and glorify him for his mercy. God’s greatest and climactic act for Israel’s salvation was the sending of the Messiah to fulfill the promises made to the patriarchs and so to gather in the great harvest of the Gentiles. (CSB)

At the end of his life, David prophesied that God’s name would also be praised among the Gentile nations (cf Mt 28:19). (TLSB)

From the beginning God had the Gentiles in mind when he made his promises. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 1)

Genesis 12:3 “I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

15:10 *rejoice O Gentiles* – Just prior to his death, Moses prophesied that Gentiles would praise God along with Israel. (TLSB)

15:11 *all you Gentiles* – The shortest psalm (Ps 117) summons all nations to praise Israel’s God for His love and faithfulness. (TLSB)

15:12 *Root of Jesse.* Jesse was the father of David (see 1Sa 16:5–13; Mt 1:6), and the Messiah was the “Son of David” (Mt 21:9). See Isa 11:1; Rev 5:5. (CSB)

Jesse was David’s father. David’s royal house was cut down, but the Messiah arose like a root from the stump of an olive tree. Isaiah 11 also announced that Gentile nations would hope in Christ and be under His reign. (TLSB)

in him Gentiles will hope. The Gentile mission of the early church was a fulfillment of this prophecy, as is the continuing evangelization of the nations. (CSB)

15:13 *God of hope.* Any hope the Christian has comes from God. (CSB)

Paul’s prayer and wish for those who read this Letter. (TLSB)

Formal liturgical language characterizes God by naming Him the God of the gifts which He gives. He who works through Scripture to give faith, endurance, and comfort so that believers might have hope is none other than “the God of hope.” (CC)

Romans 5:3-5 “Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.”

by the power of the Holy Spirit. Hope cannot be conjured up by man’s effort; it is God’s gift by his Spirit (see 8:24–25). (CSB)

He makes all things work together for their good, even the tensions created by the coexistence of the strong and weak in faith. (Franzmann)

15:8–13 The OT looked ahead to a day when Jews and Gentiles would worship God together. This day has come in Christ. Gentiles in particular should remember their hopeless existence apart from Christ (cf Eph 2:11–12). According to His prophetic promises, God has raised up Jesus. In Him, Jews and Gentiles are united to “glorify God for His mercy” (v 9). • Thank You, God, for Your Word and for Jesus, who embodies and fulfills it. By Your Holy Spirit, fill me with hope and “joy and peace in believing” (v 13). Amen. (TLSB)

Paul the Minister to the Gentiles

14 I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another. 15 But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God 16 to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. 17 In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God. 18 For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed, 19 by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ; 20 and thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else’s foundation, 21 but as it is written, “Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand.”

15:14 *instruct one another.* All who have received the words of this Letter are competent to instruct (cf 1Co 1:5–7). There may be some hyperbole here. (TLSB)

15:15 *by way of reminder.* Since Paul had never preached or taught in Rome, he may be referring to Christian doctrine generally known in the church. (CSB)

Particularly needed in Rome was the reminder of the equal place of Jews and Gentiles under both Law and Gospel, as well as within the Church. (TLSB)

15:16 *minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles.* . (CSB)

Paul’s special calling was to reach out to Gentiles (11:13; Gal 2:9), but this did not exclude his testifying to Jews as well (cf Ac 17:1–3; 26:17, 20). (TLSB)

priestly service of the gospel. Paul's priestly function was different from that of the Levitical priests. They were involved with the rituals of the temple, whereas he preached the gospel. (CSB)

"The Gentiles may be offerings acceptable to God through faith. In the Law the slaying of victims illustrated both Christ's death and the preaching of the Gospel, by which this old flesh should be put to death and new and eternal life be begun in us" (Ap XXIV 34). Perhaps also a reference to the collection Paul is gathering for Jerusalem (cf 15:25). (TLSB)

an offering...may be sanctified by the Holy Spirit. The offering Paul brought to God was the Gentile church. (CSB)

The Spirit would make the Gentiles holy before God and also set apart their offerings. (TLSB)

15:17 *be proud.* Paul was not boasting of his own achievements but of what Christ had accomplished through him. (CSB)

Word was previously excluded as boasting before God (3:27), but under Christ, it can be done properly (5:2; 2Co 10:12–18; Php 3:3–14). (TLSB)

15:18 *accomplished through me.* Cf Gal 2:20. "May the Gospel be received in faith and work and live in us, so that through the Word and the Holy Spirit's power [Romans 15:18–19], Your kingdom may triumph among us" (LC III 54). (TLSB)

obedience. Lit, to "hear under." They heard the Word (10:17), believed, and responded appropriately in their lives. (TLSB)

15:19 *signs and wonders.* As with Jesus' ministry, miracles marked Paul's apostolic ministry (Ac 14:8–10; 16:16–18; 2Co 12:12). (TLSB)

power of the Spirit. The Spirit was at work through the power of the Gospel in all Paul and Jesus did (1:16; Ac 10:38). (TLSB)

from Jerusalem. The home of the mother church, where the gospel originated and its dissemination began (see Ac 1:8). (CSB)

Early location of Paul's ministry (Ac 26:20; cf Is 2:3). (TLSB)

Illyricum. A Roman province north of Macedonia (present-day Albania and Yugoslavia). Acts mentions nothing of his ministry there, and perhaps all he means is that he reached the border. (CSB)

Roman province across the Adriatic Sea, northeast of Rome. Exactly when Paul was there is uncertain. (TLSB)

I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel. Not everyone had heard the gospel in the eastern Mediterranean, but Paul believed that his work there had been completed and it was time to move on to other places. (CSB)

Carried out the tasks Christ assigned him (Ac 22:21). (TLSB)

15:20 *my ambition.* Paul's special gift, skill, and desire. (TLSB)

not ... already been named. Where there were not yet any Christians; Paul was primarily an evangelistic missionary. (TLSB)

someone else's foundation. Paul's drive was to lay the foundation of a believing community, i.e., to till new soil for Christ (cf 1Co 3:6–11). (TLSB)

15:21 This is part of the description of Jesus as the Suffering Servant (Is 52:13–53:12), which also says the Servant will “sprinkle many nations” with His purifying blood. (TLSB)

Those. The nations. (TLSB)

15:14–21 Paul lays out the practice and scope of his mission work. Apart from God's intervention through servants such as Paul, we would not have seen, heard, or understood God's grace. Christ's servants are to respond to His calling and use their gifts in dedicated service as Paul did. Anything we do is simply “what Christ has accomplished through” us (v 18). It is all by grace and is sanctified and empowered by the Holy Spirit. • Lord, I praise You that the message of Your grace has reached me and that I have come to believe it by the power of Your Holy Spirit. Use me and the gifts You have given to me as an acceptable offering to You. Amen. (TLSB)

Paul's Plan to Visit Rome

2 This is the reason why I have so often been hindered from coming to you. 23 But now, since I no longer have any room for work in these regions, and since I have longed for many years to come to you, 24 I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while. 25 At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. 26 For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. 27 For they were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings. 28 When therefore I have completed this and have delivered to them what has been collected,[b] I will leave for Spain by way of you. 29 I know that when I come to you I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ. 30 I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, 31 that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, 32 so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company. 33 May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

15:22 Paul may have been hindered by Satan, but, more likely, by the obligations of his previous work in the eastern Mediterranean. (TLSB)

***hindered from coming to you.* Paul's great desire to complete the missionary task in the eastern Mediterranean had prevented him from making a trip to Rome. (CSB)**

15:23 *no longer have any room to work.* Because of the principle stated in v. 20. (CSB)

The foundation of the Christian Church had been laid in that part of the world through Paul's previous missionary journeys. Paul apparently understood that his service was to plant churches in major cities. (TLSB)

longed for many years to come to you. Paul's conversion and call occurred c AD 36. His active mission work began from Syrian Antioch c AD 47 (Ac 13). It was probably AD 55 when he wrote Rm. (TLSB)

15:24 *Spain.* Paul desires to lay a foundation where Christ has not yet been named. Clement of Rome wrote that Paul reached the limits of the West (Spain or Portugal). (TLSB)

helped on my journey there.† The Greek verb seems to be a technical term for moral and financial support of missionary endeavors in all of its occurrences in the NT: here; Ac 15:3; 20:38; 21:5; 1Co 16:6, 11; 2Co 1:16; Tit 3:13; 3Jn 6. Paul wanted to use the Roman church as a base of operations for a mission to Spain. (CSB)

A technical term implying financial support for Paul's mission work (Ac 15:3; 1Co 16:6, 11). Syrian Antioch had provided this in the East (Ac 13:1–3; 14:26–27; 18:22–23). (TLSB)

enjoyed your company for a while. More than a quick stop at Rome was contemplated (see 1:11–12). (CSB)

15:25 *aid to the saints.* Paul wanted to present the gift (see v. 26) personally to the Jerusalem church. The gift needed interpretation. It was not merely money; it represented the love and concern of the Gentile churches for their Jewish brothers and sisters. (CSB)

Paul has overseen a collection of money for believers in Jerusalem and is on his way there (Ac 20:1–5; 2Co 8–9). (TLSB)

saints. Refers generally to believers in Jesus Christ. (CSB)

15:26 *contribution.* See 1Co 16:1–4; 2Co 8–9. (CSB)

the poor. Church in Jerusalem was apparently quite poor and undergoing a famine (cf 2Co 8:13–15). (TLSB)

15:27 *owe.* Ongoing obligation to love others (13:8). (TLSB)

their (Jews') spiritual blessings. Especially Christ and the gospel. (CSB)

By God's work in Christ, Gentiles have become part of the community of God's people, and they share in Israel's blessing (11:17; Eph 2:11–22). (TLSB)

The financial offering Paul is bringing with a delegation (cf vv 25–26). (TLSB)

15:28 *when therefore I have completed this fruit.* The collection from the Gentile churches. (CSB)

15:29 *fullness of the blessing.* The Gospel gives all the fullness we need; still, Paul's presence in Rome will be an added source of fellowship and encouragement (cf 1:11–12). (TLSB)

15:30 *brothers.* Fellow Christians in Rome. (TLSB)

love of the Spirit. Not our love of the Spirit, but the love that the Holy Spirit gives as a fruit (Gal 5:22–23). The persons of the Trinity are invoked. (TLSB)

15:31 *delivered from the unbelievers in Judea.* Paul wanted to go to Jerusalem. The delivery of the collection was important to him, but he had received warnings about what might happen to him there (see Ac 20:22–23). (CSB)

Jews who rejected Christ as Messiah and, at times, violently opposed Paul (Ac 23:12). (TLSB)

my service ... to the saints. Paul prays that the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem will receive the offering (cf v 25). Gentile offerings coming to Jerusalem fulfill OT prophecies (Is 60:5–9; 66:20; Hg 2:7). (TLSB)

may be acceptable. Perhaps a reference to the way in which the money was to be distributed—often a delicate and difficult task. (CSB)

15:32 *by God's will.* If God opens the way to come and/or removes the obstacles of Satan. Cf v 22; 1:13. (TLSB)

15:33 *be with you.* Perhaps “is with you.” Paul assures them of God’s promised presence. (TLSB)

15:22–33 Paul lays out his current travel plans. Our desires to serve God may be hindered if we are not willing to accept gifts from others. Christ empowered Paul’s mission work and gave it the fullness of His blessing (v 29). He will give us joy, refreshment, and peace as well. • Thank You, God, for spiritual blessings of peace and joy, as well as for the encouragement given to me by my brothers and sisters in Christ. I praise You also for the material blessings You have entrusted to me. Guide me to use them wisely and to share with those in need. Amen. (TLSB)