

## Building Better Relationships

### How Then Shall We Live? - part 4

#### Romans 15

Sept. 27, 2015

#### Day One: Please One Another (15:1-7)

1. Paul gives four great signposts to help us build solid relationships and unity in spite of differences of opinion in "the little stuff," the gray areas: (1) **R**eceive one another (Rom. 14); (2) **E**dify one another (Rom. 14); (3) **A**cept one another (Rom. 15); (4) **P**lease one another (Rom. 15). We'll call them the **REAP** signposts.

2. With our freedom in Christ you hear people say, "**I** have a right to \_\_\_\_\_." But Paul sees higher reasons for our freedom--to give it up for the sake of **WE** (unity and love). Giving up what I *could rightfully do, but don't* makes a tremendous statement of love. It reflects the sacrificial love of Christ for us!!

3. Under each of the next 3 verses, write down **two** observations about "pleasing?"

*Romans 15:1 We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.*

a.

b.

<sup>2</sup> *Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.*

a.

b.

<sup>3</sup> *For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me."*

a.

b.

4. The western world has bought the idea of **individualism** as a core value. Sacrificing something I have a right to, seems absurd. Instead, Paul exalts **community** as the higher value. Paradoxically, the more we push our own individualism, the more we lose our identity. And the greater we lose our identity in community, the more we find it!

<sup>4</sup> *For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*

<sup>5</sup> *May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup> Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.*

5. Paul turns our eyes to the vertical relationship we have with God. We do the **REAP** signposts for higher purposes than just having "better relationships." What strikes you?

## Day Two: Pleasing others illustrated in Christ (15:8-13)

1. To accept us required Jesus giving up His freedom, and abandoning His rights to glory, honor and worship. Today's verses illustrate His sacrifice.

*Romans 15:7 Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.*

<sup>8</sup> *For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs*

2. Christ became a servant! For what two reasons?

<sup>9</sup> *so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy, as it is written: "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name."*

3. Christ became a servant for some more reasons. What are they?

4. Christ willingly gave up His freedom and honor for rebellious people. Was that a "net loss" or a "net gain?" Why?

<sup>10</sup> *Again, it says, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people."*

<sup>11</sup> *And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and sing praises to him, all you peoples."*

5. The "net gains" have to do with the joy people gain through the joy of finding real life in God, as demonstrated in Christ's sacrificial coming and death.

<sup>12</sup> *And again, Isaiah says, "The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him."*

6. "The Root of Jesse" refers to the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. What will be the results of His coming, in v. 12?

<sup>13</sup> *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

7. Giving up our freedom for others and for God's glory is not easy. What should help us from v. 13?

**Day Three: Sacrificing freedom requires grace (Rom. 15:14-17)**

1. Paul had commanded them to edify one another. How does he model this?

*Romans 15:14 I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another.*

2. Could those three things be said about you? If not, why not?

3. What changes might need to be made so all three do apply to you?

<sup>15</sup> *I have written you quite boldly on some points, as if to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me <sup>16</sup> to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.*

<sup>17</sup> *Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God.*

4. What do you think is the key word in verse 15? Why?

5. Paul thought of his very difficult ministry to the Gentiles as something God had "graced" him with. Grace has two New Testament usages. (1) God's unmerited favor for sinners, (2) God's power to face anything.

6. When you are elbow deep in a messy ministry/family situation, do you see yourself "graced" as in the two N.T. usages of grace?

7. Notice also what Paul says he was ministering: "the gospel of God." Your ministry must be, as Paul's was, centered around the gospel of God.

8. In 17, where does Paul rightly place the glory for all things in his ministry? Where do you place the glory in your ministry?

## **Day Four: Laying down your life for others (Rom. 15:18-24)**

*Romans 15:18 I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done--*

1. As Paul continues to give the glory to God, he also acknowledges his ministry is done in God's power. What does he say Christ has accomplished?

<sup>19</sup> *by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ.*

2. In the early church, God used miracles as a way to authenticate both the message and the messenger. To what two things does he attribute the "power?" What "power" did Paul have on his own to do signs and wonders?

<sup>20</sup> *It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation.*

<sup>21</sup> *Rather, as it is written: "Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand."*

3. How would these verses argue in favor of being a missionary to a foreign land?

<sup>22</sup> *This is why I have often been hindered from coming to you.*

4. Paul's ministry to the Gentiles was in accordance with God's plan. Paul wanted to go to Rome, but God had another plan. There are times in life where trying to find out God's will is confusing. How is this illustrated in Paul's story?

<sup>23</sup> *But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to see you,*

<sup>24</sup> *I plan to do so when I go to Spain. I hope to visit you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a while.*

5. What's important to Paul? What drives him?

6. What's important to you? What drives you?

## Day Five: A life of service and giving (Rom. 15:25-33)

*Romans 15:25 Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the saints there.*

1. What do we learn about how Paul sees relationships?

<sup>26</sup> *For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.*

2. The Christians in Judea and especially Jerusalem were going through tough financial times. During Paul's travels through the regions where he had planted churches in the Gentile world, we received offerings to take to Jerusalem to help the Jewish people who had become Christians.

3. What was their attitude toward giving money to help their needy brothers?

<sup>27</sup> *They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings.*

3. It's easy for money to "get a hold" of us. Instead, these young Christians were eager to help their fellow brothers through giving. Paul adds another compelling reason why they gave. What was it?

<sup>28</sup> *So after I have completed this task and have made sure that they have received this fruit, I will go to Spain and visit you on the way.*

4. What word does Paul use to describe the Gentiles offering to the Jews? What is the significance of using that word?

<sup>29</sup> *I know that when I come to you, I will come in the full measure of the blessing of Christ.* <sup>30</sup> *I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me.* <sup>31</sup> *Pray that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea and that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints there,* <sup>32</sup> *so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and together with you be refreshed.* <sup>33</sup> *The God of peace be with you all. Amen.*

5. You learn a lot about what's really important to someone by the things they pray! What things were important to Paul?

6. Which of these things is important to you?