



LETTERS TO THE CHURCH [ROMANS 15]

Romans 15 is a hinge point where Paul moves from theology (chapters 1-11) and practice (chapters 12-14) to a vivid picture of what the family of God looks like in practice. The entire letter to the network of house churches in Rome is a story of God's covenant faithfulness. Chapters 1-4 level the playing field between Jew and Gentile. Chapters 5-8 retell Israel's story as a new Exodus into freedom in the Spirit. Chapters 9-11 defend God's faithfulness to Israel despite her stumbling, and chapters 12-14 describe what transformed community looks like with a focus on how strong and weak believers share one table as part of the new humanity in Christ.

Chapter 15 unpacks that vision in four movements. First, Paul calls the 'strong' — those who understand their freedom in Christ — to bear with the 'weak,' those still bound by cultural or traditional obligations, by not pleasing themselves but building up their neighbor, following Christ's own example. Second, Paul roots this welcome in the gospel itself: Christ came to confirm God's promises to Israel and to bring the nations to praise God, uniting Jew and Gentile into one family under one hope. Third, Paul describes his own calling as a minister to the nations, driven by the ambition to preach where Christ has not been named.

Finally, Paul closes with concrete travel plans, revealing that the gospel produces not just belief but action. This is seen in the Gentile churches' financial gift to the poor Jerusalem believers, which is a tangible expression of unity and indebted love. The gospel doesn't just save individuals, it forms a unified, sacrificial, missionary people. This is what the church is designed and meant to be as an expression of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Discussion Questions

1. Paul says the 'strong' are those who understand their freedom in Christ, and calls them to bear with the 'weak' rather than please themselves. Where in your own life do you find it difficult to set aside your freedom or preference for the sake of someone else's conscience?
2. Some of the modern-day 'strong/weak' realities include: theology, church practice, and politics/social perspectives. Which of these categories creates the most friction in your relationships right now, and how might Romans 15:1-6 change how you engage in it?
3. Paul says Christ 'welcomed' both Jew and Gentile into one family. Is there a person or group in your church or life that you've been tempted to write off or think less of because they're different from you? What would it look like to welcome them as Christ welcomed you?

4. Sunday's sermon included a re-written Romans 15:14-21 as a mission statement for our own church community (Trellis Church). If you wrote a similar paragraph describing what God has called your specific neighborhood, workplace, or circle of relationships to be for the sake of the gospel, what would it say?

5. The Gentile churches gave financially to the poor believers in Jerusalem as an act of gospel-shaped unity. What's one concrete, maybe uncomfortable, step your group could take over the next few months to embody that same kind of sacrificial care for another part of the body of Christ?