



ROMANS 15-16

# ■ WEEK 6 ■

**May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus. Then all of you can join together with one voice, giving praise and glory to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

- Romans 15:5-6

**Proclaiming the Gospel as a Unified Church** - For Paul, Christians ought to center their entire lives—in terms of both belief and action—on Christ. The good news of Jesus' saving act is meant to be transformative, and this good news should be unapologetically proclaimed so that others can come to Christ.

WEEK 6, DAY 1  
■ **MONDAY** ■  
ROMANS 15:1-6

## ESSENTIALS VS. NON-ESSENTIALS

Paul is essentially saying to believers “keep the main thing, the main thing.” It is acceptable for believers to have strong convictions and opinions on secondary, non-salvation issues, but we don’t need to elevate those things to essential issues. Paul reminds the Romans of what really matters to God, and it is not divisive issues like the food laws. The goal is not full agreement on all non-salvation issues, our heart in the church should be unity on the essentials of faith and salvation. This continues to be a matter of discernment for mature believers in the church today.

*Paul’s point is that our concern should be for the spiritual needs of our opponents, not just for ourselves. If both groups are seeking to serve those on the other side, the conflict will take care of itself. When we seek spiritual edification rather than victory in the debate, God is pleased with us. With pressure from outside (persecution) and inside (dissension), they need the hope of the gospel more than ever. Hope is endangered when the church is fractured by conflict. The strong are obligated before God to go beyond their differences with the weak in order to establish harmony in the church. In the conflict Paul is addressing here, both sides were acting like pagans. When we have the mindset of holding all things in common we place our differences and disagreements in perspective and discover respect and love for each other in the Spirit, whichever group we belong to. We find a larger unity behind our different theological persuasions since we worship the same Lord and focus on the same essential doctrines.*

Grant Osborne, *Romans: Verse by Verse*



## REFLECTION

This unity is not only beneficial for the community but also serves to glorify God. When believers live in unity, they collectively testify to God’s love and grace, bringing glory to Him. Reflect on how you can become more unified around core doctrine rather than divided on non-essential issues in the church.

WEEK 6, DAY 2  
■ **TUESDAY** ■  
ROMANS 15:7-13

**CHRIST THE HOPE FOR BOTH JEWS AND GENTILES**

Paul in these passages takes us back to the Old Testament to show that God's plan has always been for a diverse unified church of people from all nations, tribes and tongues, including Jews and Gentiles unified under Christ.

*Christ came so that God would accept both Jew and Gentile, and so the gospel is able to break down the "dividing wall of hostility" (Ephesians 2:14); Jew and Gentile, strong and weak, rich and poor must reflect this in their relationships in the church. In fact, God's purpose was always to have a people made up of all nations, Jew and Gentile. Paul shows this in his four Old Testament quotations in Romans 15:9-12. There is a progression through them. First, God's name is to be praised among the Gentiles by his people; the Gentiles are to be invited in to praise "with his people", so that "all you peoples" (Jew and Gentile) will praise the Lord; and all this will be accomplished by "the Root of Jesse"—the great Ruler to come from the line of David, Jesse's son—as the nations come under his rule and find "hope in him". God's plan has always been for his people to proclaim to the nations that God is to be praised, and to draw the nations into his people under the rule and hope of his chosen King.*

Timothy Keller - Romans 8-16 For You



**REFLECTION**

Reflect today on Paul's words in Romans 15:13. "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." Ask God to reveal an area where you need to abound in hope and pray for the Spirit to fill you with hope. As you pray, think of someone in your life who also needs hope right now; pray they might feel the power of the Spirit fill them with hope today.

WEEK 6, DAY 3  
■ WEDNESDAY ■  
ROMANS 15:14-21

## PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL

Paul is coming to the close of this letter presenting the gospel to the Roman church and addressing the problem areas they were having, including the meaning of salvation in the new covenant and the place of the law in the Christian life. In these verses, we see his passion for proclaiming the gospel.

*We may not have Paul's calling or all his gifts, but we are called to "make disciples of all nations" and to "be prepared to give an answer ... for the hope that [we] have" so that we can "make the most of every opportunity" (Matthew 28:19; 1 Peter 3:15; Colossians 4:5). Evangelism may not be everything in our lives and ministries, as it was to Paul; but perhaps it should be far more than it is. He says he has won people to Christ "by what I have said and done". Literally, he says he has won people by "word and deed." This means he did not only get the message of the gospel across by speaking, but by his life and actions. We are not only to tell people the gospel, but to embody it in our attitudes and relationships. We are to invite (in a sense, "dare") people to look into us deeply and see what a human life rearranged by the gospel looks like. John Stott comments further: "This combination of words and works, the verbal and the visual, is a recognition that human beings often learn more through their eyes than through their ears. Words explain works, but works dramatize words.*

Timothy Keller - Romans 8-16 For You



## REFLECTION

Do you lean more towards proclaiming the gospel in word or deed? Reflect on those who have proclaimed the gospel to you by sharing Jesus in word and deed. God has put you in specific places in order for you to bring Him glory. Ask God to show you how and where you can begin to more boldly share with others what Jesus has done for you.

WEEK 6, DAY 4  
■ THURSDAY ■  
ROMANS 15:22-33

## PARTNERING IN PRAYER

When Paul wrote this book to the Romans, he was in the city of Corinth on his third missionary journey. He still hadn't been to Rome but was anxiously awaiting his visit. Paul was planning to take offerings from Gentile churches in Macedonia and Achaia to Jerusalem, but he didn't know what awaited him in Jerusalem. It didn't go quite as planned. He would arrive in Rome much later than he planned, in chains awaiting trial before Caesar (read Acts 27 for context).

*Paul expects opposition—from two quarters. First, there will be Jewish non-Christians, who will bitterly resent his coming to Jerusalem. They will see him as a traitor, a blasphemer, someone who has led Jewish people astray and destroyed the grip of the law of Moses on their lives. Second, there will be many of the Jewish Christians themselves, who for the reasons mentioned a moment ago may well find it difficult to accept money raised from non-Jewish sources. For that reason Paul urges the Roman Christians to pray for him. He has a clear sense of vocation to come to Rome, but there are major battles up ahead before he can get there. Indeed, he is setting off in the other direction altogether, going east to Jerusalem before he goes west again to Rome. As we know from Acts, the trip would indeed be a near-disaster, involving riots, beatings and trials, two years of imprisonment, a complex sea voyage and a shipwreck. We are invited, looking on, to join both in gratitude to God for all that Paul accomplished and in urgent prayer for the those who preach the gospel in our own day, especially where it crosses important cultural boundaries. Not only money, but power and the deepest sense of human identity, are challenged by the message which declares that there is one God and that the crucified and risen Jesus is his son, the world's true Lord.*

N.T. Wright - *Paul for Everyone: Romans, Part 2: Chapters 9-16*



## REFLECTION

Spend time in prayer today for those who are risking persecution and harm each day as they spread the gospel to those in other parts of the world. Pray for their safety and pray for their mission of reaching others with the hope of Jesus.

WEEK 6, DAY 5  
■ **FRIDAY** ■  
ROMANS 16

**SERVE FOR HIS GLORY**

Paul is making sure that the Romans care for those who have been faithful servants to him, including Phoebe, who was a woman who used her resources to support the church and was likely the one delivering and reading this letter to the church in Rome. He also includes a widely diverse group of men and women from different races and class in his greetings here and expresses deep gratitude for these friends and fellow servants. This shows the importance that Paul places on serving together in the body of believers, knowing this work can't be done alone. It's a group effort by these people to fund, host, teach, and give practical care and support to those in their church. This is the same way the church is intended to operate today. We all have an important part to play in the life of the church: giving, serving, meeting physical needs, pointing one another toward truth, and encouraging one another in our spiritual journeys. He closes with a few last warnings against divisiveness and false teaching, reminding them that unity in Christ and preaching the true gospel is of utmost importance.



**REFLECTION**

As we close our study of the book of Romans, here are some questions to ponder about your place in your local body of believers: How are you connected to others in your church? How can you be more invested in your church? What gifts, skills, and resources can you use to further the kingdom through your church?

WEEK 6, DAY 6  
■ SATURDAY ■  
ROMANS 3:21-31

## THE HEART OF ROMANS

Read Romans 3:21-31 one last time as we close out our study. Many biblical scholars call this section of scripture one of the most important paragraphs ever written.

*This epistle of Paul provides the most systematic answer anywhere in Scripture to the question of how to become right with God, which is the fundamental question of human existence on the assumption that God exists at all. More comprehensively, incorporating both the theological and ethical material of the epistle, Romans sums up the Christian answer to the question of how to know God's will for one's life. This letter is the fullest and most organized presentation of the heart of the gospel. All human beings have sinned and thus have become alienated from God. Restoring a desirable relationship with their Maker required the atonement wrought by Jesus Christ. Actualizing this relationship—what Christianity calls salvation—necessitates faith in Christ, which combines belief in his deity and bodily resurrection with submission to his lordship (making him ultimate Master of one's life). No form of works-righteousness can ever bring about this salvation. Still, those who have truly been justified will by definition have living within them the Spirit, who guarantees their transformation into increasingly godly people, though undoubtedly in as many different ways as there are individual believers and not without plenty of lapses and fresh starts. This growth in Christian living culminates in the ultimate glorification of the believer when Christ returns, which combines a resurrected body, free from the decay that leads to death, with a morally perfected spirit that never again sins. Because moral change begins already in this age, believers are commanded to yield themselves increasingly to the Spirit, who will empower them to obey the commands of the gospel. At the most general level, these commands involve physical and mental purity in the dedication of one's entire self to the Lord. They then proceed to the level of discovering one's individual spiritual gifts and exercising them faithfully and in love.*

Craig Blomberg, Darlene Seal, and Alicia Duprée - *From Pentecost to Patmos: Acts To Revelation*



## REFLECTION

Spend some time today summarizing in your own words the heart of Paul's message to the church in Rome and what you took away from our time in Romans.

WEEK 6, DAY 7  
■ SUNDAY ■

**REST & REFLECTION DAY**

Join us for worship today and prepare your heart to engage with next week's study of God and His word. Use your time today to rest, pray, and reflect on this week's readings.

Take notes on this week's sermon on page 62.



**REFLECTION NOTES & QUESTIONS**

This week, we looked at Romans 15-16 and specifically Paul's vision for unity and discernment within the church. Paul lays out in these chapters the heart behind believers unifying under the message of Jesus and what a healthy vibrant community of believers should look like.

As you reflect back on what we have read this week, journal your thoughts on this or these following prompts:

- Write down what you learned about God this week.
- What is something you looked at this week that you want to receive from God in greater measure? Why?
- How can you begin to apply this truth about God to your walk with Him?