

THE BOOK OF ROMANS

"Imitate Christ"

Romans 15:1-7

INTRODUCTION

1. Here is the conclusion for the preceding section (13:8-14:23), specifically the subject of the strong and the weak (14:1-23).
2. Scripture seeks for harmony among believers which results in a joyous hope. Blessed is that local assembly which experiences this.
3. Consider the following ways to get it:-
 1. BY OBLIGATION v. 1

a. Stated

The reference is to the strong. Paul takes them to task. Here is a debt, an obligation which is owed (cf. v. 27; Luke 17:10).

b. Detailed

Believers are not only to forbear one another, but to bear one another's burdens (cf. Gal. 6:1, 2). The thought is to actually take up and carry a load for someone (cf. Luke 14:27; Jn. 19:17). This is more than a mouth, but a hand!

c. Applied

Selfishness is the root of Christian disunity. Weaknesses, such as prejudices, faults, and errors are to be seen for what they are--weaknesses of faith (14:1). Work lovingly with people to carry them. Don't satisfy yourself!

2. BY EDIFICATION v. 2

Not only the strong, but the weak also are to have one goal in mind: edification. The preposition and noun show what pleasing one's neighbor for the good means. It speaks of spiritual advancement, spiritual benefit. Be careful that this does not distill to what you selfishly want, but what God desires for a believer. Building up and not tearing down is the watchword.

3. BY IMITATION v. 3a

Jesus Christ is not presented as an example, but His manner of living is an argument to support the teaching here. The text really says, "for Christ also." The aorist verb "pleased" shows that taking His life as a whole, there is absolute absence of self-pleasing in Him. His life is to be our life (Jn 15).

4. BY QUOTATION v. 3b

Three times the idea of "written" is given (vv. 3, 4). Great emphasis, therefore, is placed on the written Word of God. The quotation is from Psa. 69. Next to

Psalms 40 and 22, the 69th is quoted most in the N.T. It is the "reproach" Psalm (cf. Ps. 69:7, 9, 10, 19, 20). Reproaches fell on the Lord because He pleased not Himself, but lived to please the Father. His life was one of pain and suffering, yet it was His joy (Jn 15:11; Heb. 12:1, 2). So the believer lives only when he dies to self.

5. BY APPLICATION v. 4.

a. Scripture

The enduring value of O.T. Scripture is clearly taught here. It is just impossible to set aside the O.T. It is there for instruction (2 Tim. 3:16).

b. Purpose

Here are big words: patience, comfort, and hope. The first two indicate the experiences one can read about in the O.T. As a result, patience is stimulated and this enlivens comfort. From these a settled hope arises. The verb "have" is present tense, hence, keep on having hope. The equation is simple: Scriptures → learning → patience and comfort → hope.

6. BY SUPPLICATION vv. 5, 6

a. To God v. 5a

From the Scriptures, Paul turns to God Himself as the Source of patience and comfort (same Greek terms as v. 4). After all, He is the Giver and the Word is the mediation through which deliberate steadfastness under pressure is provided. How important it is to read and know the Word of God!

b. About harmony v. 5b

This is the result of the patience and comfort. Not unanimity on disputed points or practices, but to loving interrelationships. This harmony will be according to the norm of Christ Jesus. Therefore all wrong unanimity will be excluded.

c. About praise v. 6

not our example, but our very life.
"One mind" is used 11 times by Luke (cf. Acts 1:14), but only here by Paul. It speaks of one "accord." The mouth is the vehicle of united confession. This unity of life will result in unity and harmony of worship ("glorify"). What a doxology for God continuously (present tense). So dissent is turned to united praise. Who is God? He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is through the Son it is all done.

CONCLUSION Wherefore is what it says--this is the end of it all. Twice the verb receive is used; once to both strong and weak and once for our Lord. All are urged to receive all (i.e. who have genuine faith in the Gospel). Why? Because Christ has received them--well may we!

Why did He receive them all? That God might gain glory. So be it.