



A D-GROUP CURRICULUM

# LIVE BY FAITH

CALLED TO LOVE + SERVE

ROMANS CHAPTERS 12-15





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# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

## PURPOSE

The book of Romans is a cornerstone of Christian theology, offering profound insights into faith, salvation, and righteous living. This study guide aims to help you “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18) through an in-depth exploration of Paul’s letter to the Romans. As you engage with this guide, you’ll be equipped to live out your faith more authentically and to share the transformative power of the gospel in your daily life.

## STRUCTURE

This guide is designed for a 7-week study, with each week focusing on a specific passage from Romans. Each week’s study includes:

- 1. Introduction:** Provides context and key themes for the week’s passage.
- 2. Scripture:** The full text of the week’s passage from the ESV translation.
- 3. Daily Personal Study:** Five days of reflection questions to deepen your understanding.
- 4. Daily Prayer:** A focused prayer related to the week’s scripture passage.
- 5. Group Discussion Questions:** Divided into three sections:
  - Know: Reflects on personal experiences related to the passage.
  - Grow: Dives deeper into the text, often incorporating related Scripture.
  - Show: Encourages practical application of the passage’s teachings.

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

### 1. Personal Study

- Read the introduction and Scripture passage at the beginning of each week.
- Engage with the Daily Personal Study questions throughout the week, spending time in prayer and reflection.
- Use the provided space to journal your thoughts, questions, and insights.

### 2. Group Discussion

- Come prepared to share your reflections from your personal study.
- Engage openly and honestly with the Know, Grow, and Show questions.
- Be ready to both share your own insights and learn from others in your group.

### 3. Application

- Pay special attention to the “Show” questions each week, which challenge you to apply the Scripture to your daily life.
- Look for ways to live out the truths you’re learning in your family, workplace, and community.

#### 4. Continuous Growth

- As you progress through the study, notice how Paul builds his argument throughout Romans.
- Reflect on how each week's passage contributes to the overall theme of "living by faith."

Remember, the goal of this study is not just to gain knowledge, but to be transformed by God's Word. As you engage with Romans, pray for the Holy Spirit to illuminate the text and guide you in applying its truths to your life.

*"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, 'The righteous shall live by faith.'" — Romans 1:16–17*

## INTRODUCTION TO ROMANS 12–15

Having journeyed through the rich theological foundations of Romans 1–11, where Paul masterfully laid out the doctrines of human sinfulness, God's grace, and salvation through faith in Christ, we now turn to the transformative implications of these truths in Romans 12–15. This section of Romans, which we've titled "Live By Faith: Called to Love and Serve," reveals how the mercies of God we've received should radically change how we relate to God, to fellow believers, and to the world around us.

Romans 12 begins with the pivotal word "therefore," signaling that everything Paul is about to teach flows directly from the gospel truths he has established. If Romans 1–11 answers the question "What must I believe?", Romans 12–15 addresses "How then shall I live?" For the Roman Christians who were potentially facing persecution under Emperor Nero, and for us today navigating an increasingly secular culture, these chapters provide practical wisdom for living distinctively Christian lives that honor God.

This section follows a beautiful progression, starting with our personal response to God's mercy through offering ourselves as "living sacrifices" (12:1–2). Paul then expands outward to show how this transformation affects our relationships within the church body through humble service and the use of spiritual gifts (12:3–8), followed by how we should love one another authentically (12:9–21). He then addresses our relationship to governing authorities (13:1–7), our obligation to love our neighbors (13:8–14), and how to maintain unity (14:1–15:7).

Throughout these chapters, we'll discover that true worship isn't confined to Sunday services but involves offering our whole selves to God daily. We'll learn how the transformation of our minds leads to the transformation of our actions, relationships, and even our view of civil authorities. We'll wrestle with challenging questions: How do we maintain unity despite differences? How do we balance personal freedom with sacrificial love for others? How do we live peacefully in a world that might oppose our faith?

Whether you're a new believer seeking to understand what Christian living looks like, or a mature disciple wanting to deepen your walk with Christ, these chapters contain practical wisdom that will challenge and encourage you. As we study together, we'll see that living by faith isn't just about believing the right things—it's about allowing the gospel to transform every aspect of our lives so that we might "discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:2).

# WEEK 26: ROMANS 12:1–2

## INTRODUCTION

Having completed the first eleven chapters of Romans where Paul thoroughly lays out the theological foundations of the gospel — our sin, God’s grace, and our salvation through faith in Christ — he now begins the practical section of his letter with the pivotal word “therefore.” This transition marks the beginning of the third and final section of Romans where believers are “Called to Love and Serve.” In Romans 12:1–2, Paul urges believers to respond to God’s mercies by offering their entire lives as “living sacrifices,” a radical concept for both his original Roman audience and for us today. For the Christians in Rome who were potentially facing persecution, the call to be a living sacrifice and to resist conformity to their surrounding culture would have been both challenging and costly. Similarly, modern believers face the tension of how to live distinctively Christian lives in a society that often pulls us toward worldly patterns of thinking and living. Paul’s call to be “transformed by the renewal of your mind” reminds us that genuine worship isn’t confined to Sunday services but involves offering our whole selves to God daily. This week, we’ll explore how this transformation process occurs and what it means to discern God’s “good, acceptable, and perfect will” in our everyday lives.

## ROMANS 12:1–2 (ESV)

*<sup>1</sup> I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

## DAILY PERSONAL STUDY: ROMANS 12:1–2

### Day One

Read Romans 12:1–2 carefully, noting how it begins with “therefore.” This word connects what Paul has taught in the first 11 chapters about God’s mercy and grace with how we should respond. How does understanding God’s mercy (as described throughout Romans 1–11) motivate you to present yourself as a “living sacrifice”? Consider writing down specific aspects of God’s mercy from earlier chapters that most impact your desire to worship Him through your daily life.

### Day Two

Focus on the phrase “present your bodies as a living sacrifice” in Romans 12:1. Compare this with Old Testament sacrificial practices (e.g., Leviticus 1:1–9). How is

Paul's concept both similar to and different from those earlier sacrifices? Consider how this imagery might have challenged first-century Roman Christians who were potentially facing persecution, and how it challenges you today in your specific circumstances.

### **Day Three**

Study the concept of "spiritual worship" (or "reasonable service" in some translations) in Romans 12:1. How does this expand your understanding of worship beyond music or church services? Consider Hebrews 13:15–16, which describes other forms of worship that please God. Journal about areas of your life you hadn't previously considered as opportunities for worship, and how this perspective might transform your approach to everyday activities.

### **Day Four**

Examine the command "do not be conformed to this world" in Romans 12:2. What specific patterns of worldly thinking or behavior do you find yourself most easily adapting to? Compare this with Jesus' prayer in John 17:14–19, where He speaks of His followers being "in the world but not of the world." What tensions do you experience between living in your culture while maintaining distinctive Christian values and priorities?

### **Day Five**

Reflect on what it means to be "transformed by the renewal of your mind" in Romans 12:2. How does this process lead to discerning God's will? Consider 2 Corinthians 3:18 and Colossians 3:1–4, which also speak about transformation and setting our minds on things above. What spiritual disciplines or practices help you most in renewing your mind? How might you strengthen these practices as we begin this Romans series?

## **DAILY PRAYER FOR THIS WEEK**

Lord, thank You for Your great mercy revealed in Jesus Christ. Help me understand what it means to offer my life as a living sacrifice. Transform my mind through Your Word so that my life increasingly reflects Your will rather than worldly patterns. Show me specific areas where I need renewal, and empower me by Your Spirit to live a life that truly worships You. In Jesus' name, Amen.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### KNOW

Having explored the rich theological foundations of the gospel in Romans 1–11, Paul now pivots in chapter 12 to the practical implications of these truths. This transition marks the beginning of the third and final section of Romans, where believers are “Called to Love and Serve.” As we begin this journey together, let’s consider how we personally respond to God’s mercy in our daily lives.

- When have you experienced making a personal sacrifice that was difficult but ultimately rewarding? How did that experience shape your understanding of what it means to “sacrifice” something important?
- Think about a time when you felt pressure to conform to others’ expectations or social norms that didn’t align with your values as a Christian. How did you respond to that pressure?

### GROW

Romans 12:1–2 contains profound truth about how believers should respond to the gospel. Paul’s instruction to present ourselves as “living sacrifices” and to be “transformed by the renewal of our minds” challenges us to examine how God’s mercy should revolutionize our thinking and living. Let’s explore how these familiar verses reveal a radical call to worship through our everyday lives.

- Read Romans 12:1. Paul begins with “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God...” How does this transitional statement connect what Paul has previously taught in Romans 1–11 with what he’s now instructing believers to do? Consider the importance of the word “therefore” in connecting God’s mercy with our response.
- What does Paul mean by presenting our “bodies as a living sacrifice?” How does this imagery contrast with Old Testament sacrificial practices, and what implications does this have for how we live today? Consider Philippians 1:20–21 where Paul speaks about Christ being “honored in my body, whether by life or by death.”
- In Romans 12:2, Paul commands us not to be “conformed to this world.” What specific areas of conformity to worldly patterns do you see Christians struggling with today? How does James 4:4 (“friendship with the world is enmity with God”) help us understand this warning?
- What does it mean to be “transformed by the renewal of your mind?” Consider Ephesians 4:22–24 which speaks of putting off the old self and being “renewed in the spirit of your minds.” What practical disciplines help in this renewing process?
- Paul states that through transformation we may “discern what is the will of God.” How does this passage suggest we discover God’s will? Tim Keller

notes, “The will of God is not primarily a place, a thing, or a direction. It is primarily a relationship” (Walking with God through Pain and Suffering, 2013). How might this perspective change how Christians typically approach “finding God’s will?”

## **SHOW**

Understanding God’s truth should always lead to application. The apostle Paul doesn’t just give us theological concepts to understand, but practical ways to live out our faith. Now let’s consider how we can apply these transformational principles from Romans 12:1–2 in our daily lives this week.

- Based on Romans 12:1, identify one specific area of your life that you need to surrender more fully to God as a “living sacrifice” this week. What practical step will you take to begin this process?
- What is one worldly pattern or influence you’ve noticed conforming your thinking lately? How will you intentionally renew your mind in this area through Scripture, prayer, or Christian community this week?
- Romans 12:1–2 emphasizes that transformation happens through the renewing of our minds, which affects our behavior. Choose one daily activity this week (driving, eating, working, parenting, etc.) and describe how you could approach it differently as an act of “spiritual worship” in response to God’s mercy.



# WEEK 27: ROMANS 12:3–8

## INTRODUCTION

Having explored what it means to be “transformed by the renewal of your mind” in Romans 12:1–2, Paul now turns to how this transformation impacts our understanding of ourselves and our place within the church community. In Romans 12:3–8, Paul addresses a tension that existed both for his original Roman audience and continues for us today: the balance between individual gifting and corporate unity. The Roman Christians, living in a culture that highly valued status and personal honor, needed Paul’s guidance about thinking with “sober judgment” rather than inflated self-importance. Similarly, we live in a time that celebrates individual achievement and self-sufficiency, making Paul’s call to interdependence countercultural for us as well. Just as the early church had to learn that diversity of gifts doesn’t undermine unity but actually strengthens it, we too must discover how our unique abilities contribute to the health of the whole body. This passage challenges us to examine both how we think about ourselves—with neither pride nor false humility—and how we actively serve others through the gifts God has graciously given us.

## ROMANS 12:3-8 (ESV)

<sup>3</sup> For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. <sup>4</sup> For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. <sup>6</sup> Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; <sup>7</sup> if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; <sup>8</sup> the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

## DAILY PERSONAL STUDY: ROMANS 12:3–8

### Day One

Read Romans 12:3–8 carefully. Notice how Paul begins with a warning against thinking too highly of ourselves. How does this connect to his teaching on presenting ourselves as “living sacrifices” in Romans 12:1–2? Consider areas in your life where pride might be hindering your service to others or your relationship with God. Journal about what “sober judgment” might look like in your specific circumstances.

## Day Two

Focus on Romans 12:4–5's body metaphor. How does this metaphor illuminate both our individuality and our interconnectedness as believers? Compare this with Paul's similar teaching in 1 Corinthians 12:12–27. Reflect on your own sense of belonging in the body of Christ. Do you feel connected to other believers? Why or why not? Consider how your church experience might be enriched by deeper connections with fellow members.

## Day Three

Study Romans 12:6–8's list of spiritual gifts. Which of these gifts do you believe God has given you? Consider taking a Spiritual Gift Survey at <https://gifts.churchgrowth.org>. How have you seen these gifts at work in your life and in your church community? Consider how your understanding of spiritual gifts has evolved over your Christian journey. Compare Paul's teaching here with his more extensive discussions in 1 Corinthians 12–14 and Ephesians 4:11–16. Journal about ways you might develop and use your gifts more effectively.

## Day Four

Examine how Paul emphasizes the manner in which we should exercise our gifts in Romans 12:6–8 (prophecy “in proportion to faith,” service “in serving,” etc.). Why is the attitude behind our service as important as the service itself? Consider areas where you might be serving with mixed motives or with a spirit contrary to what Paul describes. How might Romans 12:1–2's call to be “transformed by the renewal of your mind” help reshape your approach to using your gifts?

## Day Five

Reflect on how Romans 12:3–8 continues Paul's theme of living by faith that we've seen throughout the book. How does properly understanding and using our spiritual gifts demonstrate faith in God's design for the church? Journal about ways you can step out in faith this week by serving others through your gifts. Consider how your service might contribute to the unity and health of your church community, fulfilling Paul's vision of the body “joined and held together” (Ephesians 4:16).

## DAILY PRAYER FOR THIS WEEK

Father, thank You for the unique gifts You've given me through Your grace. Help me to think of myself with sober judgment, neither inflating nor diminishing the

gifts You've entrusted to me. Show me how to use these gifts effectively to build up the body of Christ and glorify Your name. Guard my heart against pride and help me to serve others with sincere love and humility. May I find my place within Your church and contribute to its unity and strength. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

### **KNOW**

In Romans 12:3–8, Paul shifts from theoretical theology to practical application, showing us how the transformed life in Christ manifests in community. These verses paint a picture of humble service within the Body of Christ where each member recognizes their God-given gifts. As we begin our discussion, let's reflect on our own experiences with gifts, service, and community.

- Everyone has strengths and abilities they bring to a group. What's something you're naturally good at that others might not know about you? (This could be anything from cooking to public speaking to organizing things.)
- Think about someone who has significantly influenced your life by how they served others. What impact did their example have on you?

### **GROW**

Paul's teaching in Romans 12:3–8 provides essential guidance for how believers should function together in the church. Having encouraged believers to present their bodies as living sacrifices and to be transformed by the renewal of their minds (12:1–2), Paul now focuses on how this transformation shapes our understanding of ourselves and our role within the Body of Christ. Let's explore these powerful truths that unite sound theology with everyday church life.

- Read Romans 12:3. Paul begins with a warning about not thinking too highly of ourselves but instead thinking with "sober judgment." Why do you think he starts with this caution before discussing spiritual gifts? Consider how pride might affect our service in the church. As C.S. Lewis wrote, "Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next person" (*Mere Christianity*, 1952, p. 122).
- What does Paul mean by "the measure of faith God has assigned to each" in verse 3? How does this relate to the different gifts mentioned in verses 6–8? This perspective on gifts comes from God's grace rather than our merit. Compare with Ephesians 4:7 and 1 Corinthians 12:11.
- In verses 4–5, Paul uses the metaphor of the body to describe the church. How does this metaphor help us understand both our diversity and our unity? What happens when parts of the human body don't function properly together? How might this apply to the church? Consider 1 Corinthians 12:12–27 for additional insight.

- Look at verses 6–8. Which of these spiritual gifts resonates most with you personally, and why? Consider John Piper's insight: "Spiritual gifts are abilities given by the Holy Spirit to every Christian according to God's design and grace for the purpose of building up the body of Christ" (Desiring God blog, "What Are Spiritual Gifts?", 2016).
- How does Paul's teaching in this passage connect to his earlier statements about being "transformed by the renewal of your mind" (12:2)? What's the relationship between having a renewed mind and properly understanding our place in the body of Christ?

## SHOW

Understanding our spiritual gifts isn't just about gaining knowledge—it's about putting that knowledge into action through humble service in the Body of Christ. As 1 Timothy 4:12 reminds us, there's no age minimum or maximum for serving in the church. Each believer, regardless of age or season of life, has been given specific gifts to build up the church and glorify God. Let's consider how we can apply Paul's teaching to our lives this week.

- Based on your understanding of spiritual gifts from this passage, what is one specific way you can use your gifts to serve your local church family in the coming month? Consider how your service might strengthen the unity of the body.
- Our spiritual gifts are meant to serve the body and bring glory to God, not ourselves. Is there a ministry or service opportunity at our church that you've been hesitant to engage with but feel God might be calling you toward? What's one step you could take to explore this further? (Consider taking a Spiritual Gift Survey at <https://gifts.churchgrowth.org>.)







# WEEK 28: ROMANS 12:9–21

## INTRODUCTION

Having explored the transformative call to present our bodies as living sacrifices and be renewed in our minds in Romans 12:1–8, Paul now turns to practical expressions of this renewed life in Romans 12:9–21. This passage provides a beautiful picture of what living by faith looks like in our relationships with others, both within and outside the body of Christ. For the original Roman believers, these instructions challenged cultural norms of status and honor, calling them to a countercultural way of treating one another and even their enemies. Today, we face similar tensions as we navigate a world that often values self-protection and retaliation over genuine love and forgiveness. Just as the Roman Christians needed guidance on loving authentically in a hostile environment, we too need Paul's wisdom for showing Christ-like love in our polarized society. This section builds upon the theological foundation laid throughout Romans, reminding us that God's mercy changes everything — not just our standing before Him, but how we see and treat others, even those who harm us. As we study these verses together, we'll discover how living by faith means being filled with power and hope to love others as Christ has loved us.

## ROMANS 12:9–21 (ESV)

<sup>9</sup> Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. <sup>10</sup> Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. <sup>11</sup> Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. <sup>13</sup> Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. <sup>14</sup> Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. <sup>15</sup> Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup> Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. <sup>17</sup> Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. <sup>18</sup> If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. <sup>19</sup> Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." <sup>20</sup> To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." <sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

## DAILY PERSONAL STUDY: ROMANS 12:9–21

### Day 1

Read Romans 12:9–13 carefully. Notice how Paul begins with the foundational command "Let love be genuine" before giving specific examples of what this

looks like. In what ways might your love for others be tinged with hypocrisy or self-interest? Ask God to show you areas where your love needs to become more authentic. Consider how this connects to Paul's earlier appeal in Romans 12:1-2 to present yourself as a "living sacrifice" to God.

## **Day 2**

Focus on Romans 12:14-16, particularly the command to "Bless those who persecute you." This radical instruction echoes Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:43-48). Reflect on a situation where you've been mistreated or persecuted in some way. How did you respond? How would a response of blessing rather than cursing demonstrate the transforming power of the gospel that Paul described in Romans 1:16?

## **Day 3**

Study Romans 12:17-18 regarding peaceful relationships with others. Note Paul's realistic qualification: "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all." What does this reveal about the nature of peace-making in a fallen world? Consider how this connects with Paul's teaching about peace with God through justification by faith in Romans 5:1-2. How does being at peace with God enable us to pursue peace with others?

## **Day 4**

Examine Romans 12:19-20 about leaving vengeance to God and showing kindness to enemies. These verses quote from Deuteronomy 32:35 and Proverbs 25:21-22. How do these Old Testament references deepen your understanding of God's consistent character throughout Scripture? Reflect on how this connects to Paul's discussion of God's mercy toward both Jews and Gentiles in Romans 9-11. How does remembering God's mercy toward you affect your attitude toward those who have wronged you?

## **Day 5**

Reflect on Romans 12:21's powerful conclusion: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." This verse summarizes the entire passage while connecting to the theme of victory in Christ throughout Romans (see Romans 8:37-39). In what specific situation are you currently struggling not to be "overcome by evil"? How might you actively "overcome evil with good" in that situation this week? Remember Paul's assurance

that we are “more than conquerors through him who loved us” (Romans 8:37).

## **DAILY PRAYER FOR THIS WEEK**

Father, as I study Your Word this week, transform my understanding of what it means to love genuinely. Fill me with Your power and hope so I can love others as You have loved me. Give me the courage to bless those who persecute me, the wisdom to pursue peace, and the strength to overcome evil with good. May my life increasingly reflect the power of Your grace at work within me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

### **KNOW**

In Romans 12:9–21, Paul transitions from theological teaching to practical application, showing us what it means to live by faith in everyday relationships. As we begin exploring this rich passage about genuine love in action, let's reflect on our own experiences with love and honor.

- Think about someone who has shown you genuine love during a difficult time in your life. What did they do that made their love feel authentic rather than forced or fake?
- Romans 12:10 talks about outdoing one another in showing honor. Share about a time when someone honored you in a way that surprised or deeply touched you.

### **GROW**

Having established the foundation of presenting our bodies as living sacrifices in Romans 12:1–8, Paul now offers specific instructions for how this transformed life should manifest in our relationships. These verses present a beautiful picture of what living by faith looks like in the way we love others—both within the body of believers and beyond, even extending to our enemies.

- Read Romans 12:9. Paul begins with “Let love be genuine.” The Greek word for “genuine” here means “without hypocrisy.” What does hypocritical love look like versus genuine love? Consider Jesus' words in Matthew 6:1–4 about doing righteous deeds before others.
- In verses 10–13, Paul gives several instructions for how believers should relate to one another within the church. Which of these commands stands out to you most, and why?
- Looking at verses 14–16, how do these instructions challenge cultural norms

both in Paul's day and ours? Compare this with Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:43–48 about loving enemies.

- Romans 12:17–18 says, “Repay no one evil for evil... If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.” What does Paul mean by “if possible” and “so far as it depends on you”? What are the boundaries of this command? Consider Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s thoughts: “The Bible directs us not to simply note that our enemy is acting against his own interests, but to see that he is our brother and that his hatred for us is hurting him” (The Cost of Discipleship).
- Verses 19–20 quote Deuteronomy 32:35 and Proverbs 25:21–22 about leaving vengeance to God and serving enemies. How does this connect with Paul’s earlier teaching about God’s mercy in Romans 12:1–2?

## SHOW

Paul’s instructions in this passage aren’t merely theoretical—they’re meant to be lived out daily as we’re filled with God’s power and hope. As we conclude our discussion, let’s consider how we can practically apply these principles of genuine love, honor, and overcoming evil with good in our lives this week.

- This passage calls us to “abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good” (v.9b). What specific evil in your life do you need to more actively “abhor,” and what good do you need to more firmly “hold fast to” this week?
- Based on verses 14–21, identify one “enemy” or difficult person in your life. Following Paul’s instruction, take time right now to pray for this person, asking God to bless them. Then, what is one practical way you could “feed” or “give drink” to this person this week?
- Romans 12:12 instructs us to “Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.” Which of these three practices needs the most development in your life right now, and what specific step will you take this week to grow in that area?



# WEEK 29: ROMANS 13:1–7

## INTRODUCTION

Having explored the transformative power of the gospel and the believer's call to spiritual renewal in previous chapters, Paul now turns in Romans 13:1–7 to address the Christian's relationship with civil government. Written during the relatively benign early period of Emperor Nero's reign, Paul provides divinely inspired guidance on how believers should navigate their dual citizenship in God's kingdom and the kingdoms of this world. This passage presents significant tension for both the original Roman church—who may have wondered if their allegiance to Christ freed them from obligations to pagan authorities—and for us today as we wrestle with balancing submission to government with our ultimate allegiance to God. Just as the early Christians had to discern how to honor Christ while living under Roman rule, we too must determine how to faithfully represent Jesus in our civic engagement. Paul's teaching that "there is no authority except from God" challenges us to view even imperfect human governments as divinely instituted for our good, while still recognizing the limits of that submission when authorities contradict God's commands.

## ROMANS 13:1–7 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> *Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.* <sup>2</sup> *Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.* <sup>3</sup> *For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, <sup>4</sup> for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.* <sup>5</sup> *Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience.* <sup>6</sup> *For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing.* <sup>7</sup> *Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.*

## DAILY PERSONAL STUDY: ROMANS 13:1–7

### Day 1

Read Romans 13:1–2 and reflect on Paul's foundational statement that "there is no authority except from God." What does this reveal about God's sovereignty over human institutions? Consider how this perspective might challenge your view of government, regardless of whether you agree with current leadership. Compare this with Jesus' interaction with Pilate in John 19:10–11 and Daniel's understanding of God's sovereignty in Daniel 2:21.

## Day 2

Focus on Romans 13:3–4 and the description of governing authorities as “God’s servant for your good.” How does this description compare with your experience of government? Consider the purpose God has established for civil authorities according to this passage. Reflect on how you might pray differently for your leaders in light of their God-ordained role, even when they fall short of this ideal.

## Day 3

Study Romans 13:5 and Paul’s two reasons for submission: “because of wrath” and “for the sake of conscience.” What’s the difference between these motivations? Consider how living “for the sake of conscience” elevates our obedience beyond mere compliance to an act of worship. How might this perspective transform routine interactions with authority in your daily life?

## Day 4

Examine Romans 13:6–7 regarding taxes, respect, and honor. How do these practical instructions connect to Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 22:15–22 about giving to Caesar what is Caesar’s? Reflect on whether your attitude toward taxes and civil authorities reflects the honor and respect Paul commands. What might need to change in your heart to align more fully with this teaching?

## Day 5

Consider Romans 13:1–7 in light of the theme “Living by Faith: Filled with Power and Hope.” How does submission to earthly authorities demonstrate trust in God’s ultimate authority? Reflect on Acts 5:27–29 where Peter and the apostles say, “We must obey God rather than men.” How do these passages work together to guide believers in navigating the tensions of dual citizenship in God’s kingdom and earthly kingdoms?

## **DAILY PRAYER FOR THIS WEEK**

Father, thank You for establishing governing authorities as part of Your sovereign plan. Help me to honor and respect those in leadership, even when I disagree with them. Give me wisdom to discern when obedience to You requires respectful resistance to human authority. May my citizenship on earth reflect my primary citizenship in heaven, bringing glory to Your name. Let me live by faith in Your sovereignty over all earthly powers. In Jesus’ name, Amen.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### KNOW

In Romans 13:1–7, Paul addresses the Christian's relationship with civil government, calling believers to submit to governing authorities while maintaining their ultimate allegiance to God. This passage challenges us to live out our dual citizenship—in the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world—with wisdom, integrity, and humble obedience to God's ordained order. Before diving deeper into the theological aspects, let's reflect on our personal experiences with authority, submission, and citizenship.

- Think about a time when you had to follow rules you didn't particularly like or agree with (at school, work, or elsewhere). How did you respond, and what did you learn from that experience?
- Who was an authority figure in your life growing up that had a positive influence on you? What qualities made them effective as a leader?
- In what areas of life do you find it easiest to submit to authority, and where do you find it most challenging? What do you think accounts for the difference?

### GROW

Paul establishes the profound theological truth that all authority ultimately comes from God, which provides the foundation for Christian citizenship. As we explore these verses, we'll discover how this teaching challenges and shapes our relationship with governing authorities while maintaining our primary allegiance to Christ.

- Read Romans 13:1–2. Paul says that “there is no authority except from God.” How does viewing government as established by God change our perspective on civil authorities? Compare this with Jesus' statement to Pilate in John 19:11: “You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above.”
- Looking at verses 1–2, what reasons does Paul give for submitting to governing authorities? Consider N.T. Wright's observation: “For Paul to announce that the one true God was the source of the emperor's authority was to make a statement about the lordship of Israel's God over pagan gods, not to say that the emperor was right in everything he did” (Wright, *Paul for Everyone: Romans*, p. 718).
- In verses 3–4, Paul describes government as God's servant that carries out God's wrath on wrongdoers. How does this ideal role of government compare with the reality we often experience? Consider John Stott's insight: “Submission is not an absolute concept. It relates to those things which belong legitimately to the state's jurisdiction. When the state commands what God forbids or forbids what God commands, then our duty is to resist,

not to submit, to disobey the state in order to obey God" (Stott, *The Message of Romans*, p. 341).

- Paul uses the term "servant" (diakonos) for civil authorities in verse 4—the same word used for ministers in the church. What does this tell us about how God can work through secular institutions? In what ways might God be using governmental authorities today, even imperfect ones?
- In verses 5–7, Paul addresses practical matters like taxes and honor. Why does Paul say we should submit "for the sake of conscience" and not just to avoid punishment? How does Dietrich Bonhoeffer's distinction help us: "The Christian owes allegiance to the government as the divinely appointed order of preservation in the sinful world. But this allegiance can never mean the abandonment of one's allegiance to God" (Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*)?

## SHOW

Understanding God's design for government and our responsibility as Christian citizens should transform how we live. As Warren Wiersbe notes, "The Christian pays his taxes and shows respect to government officials because this is the right thing to do. It's a matter of conscience before God, not just a matter of avoiding punishment." Let's consider how to apply these truths in our daily lives.

- What is one specific way you can show proper respect and honor to governing authorities this week, even if you disagree with some of their policies or decisions?
- How might God be calling you to be a positive influence within the systems and structures of authority in your life (workplace, community, church, family)? What would it look like to serve as "salt and light" in these contexts?
- Consider Chuck Colson's observation: "The Christian is a citizen of two kingdoms—the kingdom of this world and the Kingdom of God... This is not a contradiction but a divine paradox that we live out by seeking to be faithful citizens of both kingdoms" (Colson, *God and Government*, p. 124). What is one area where you need to reevaluate your citizenship priorities to better reflect this balance?



# WEEK 30: ROMANS 13:8–14

## INTRODUCTION

Having explored our relationship to governmental authorities in Romans 13:1–7, Paul now shifts our focus to two foundational aspects of Christian living: love as the fulfillment of the law and moral urgency in light of Christ’s imminent return. In Romans 13:8–14, we discover that while we should be free from financial debt, we remain under a perpetual “debt of love” to one another—a beautiful obligation that can never be fully discharged. For Paul’s original Roman audience, living under imperial rule and facing potential persecution, these words offered practical guidance on how to navigate relationships with both fellow believers and the surrounding pagan culture. For us today, this passage challenges our tendency to compartmentalize faith and ethics, reminding us that genuine love for others isn’t merely a feeling but the active fulfillment of God’s moral requirements. As we’ve seen throughout Romans, we are saved by grace through faith alone, not by works, yet our faith should produce the fruit of obedience and love. Paul’s urgent call to “wake from sleep” and “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” confronts our spiritual complacency and invites us to live with moral clarity in an increasingly dark world. As we study these verses together, we’ll discover how living by faith means experiencing both the power of the Holy Spirit to love sacrificially and the hope of Christ’s return, which together transform our everyday relationships and choices.

## ROMANS 13:8–14 (ESV)

<sup>8</sup> Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. <sup>9</sup> For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” <sup>10</sup> Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. <sup>11</sup> Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. <sup>12</sup> The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. <sup>13</sup> Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. <sup>14</sup> But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

## DAILY PERSONAL STUDY: ROMANS 13:8–14

### Day 1

Read Romans 13:8–10 and consider Paul’s command to “owe no one anything, except to love each other.” How does this connect to Jesus’ teaching to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37–40)? Notice how Paul transitions

from our obligations to government authorities (Romans 13:1–7) to our perpetual obligation of love. Journal about the difference between obligations that can be fully paid (like taxes or debts) and the ongoing “debt of love” that can never be fully discharged.

## **Day 2**

Focus on verse 10: “Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” How does this statement build on Paul’s earlier teaching about the law in Romans 7:7–13? Consider specific ways that loving others fulfills the commandments Paul lists in verse 9. How might this transform your understanding of Christian obedience from mere rule-following to relationship-centered living?

## **Day 3**

Study Romans 13:11–12 regarding our awareness of time and Christ’s return. How does this urgency connect to Paul’s teaching about hope in Romans 8:18–25? Compare this “wake from sleep” imagery with Jesus’ parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25:1–13. Reflect on areas in your spiritual life where you might be “sleeping” and need to awaken to greater watchfulness and preparedness.

## **Day 4**

Examine the vivid imagery in verses 12–13 of “casting off” and “putting on.” How does this relate to Paul’s teaching about our new identity in Christ from Romans 6:1–14? Consider the specific sins listed in verse 13 that we are to “cast off.” Are there any of these that you struggle with or make provision for in your life? How might greater awareness of Christ’s return help you resist these temptations?

## **Day 5**

Meditate on verse 14’s command to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” and what this means practically in your daily life. Connect this to Paul’s teaching about being “in Christ” (Romans 8:1) and being conformed to Christ’s image (Romans 8:29). What does it look like to “wear” Christ like a garment in your family relationships, work environment, or personal thought life? Consider writing a prayer asking the Holy Spirit to help you clothe yourself with Christ today.

## DAILY PRAYER FOR THIS WEEK

Father, thank You for paying my debt of sin through Christ's sacrifice. Help me to live in the perpetual debt of love toward others, fulfilling Your law through genuine care for my neighbors. Awaken me from spiritual slumber, renew my sense of urgency, and empower me to cast off works of darkness. May I put on Christ daily, making no provision for sinful desires, but instead reflecting His character in all I do. Let me live filled with His power and hope. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### KNOW

In Romans 13:8–14, Paul transitions from our obligations to governing authorities to our deeper obligation of love toward others and our urgent need to live in light of Christ's return. Before we dive into these profound truths, let's connect with one another through some experiences that relate to these themes.

- Share a time when someone went “above and beyond” to show love to you. How did it make you feel, and how did it impact your relationship with that person?
- We all struggle with time management. What area of your life feels most urgently in need of attention right now? How does this sense of urgency affect your decisions and priorities?

### GROW

Paul's teaching in Romans 13:8–14 presents two powerful motivations for Christian ethics: love as the fulfillment of the law (vv.8–10) and moral urgency in light of Christ's imminent return (vv.11–14). These truths have transformed believers throughout church history and continue to shape how we live as citizens of God's kingdom while still in this present world.

- Read Romans 13:8–10. Paul says we should “owe no one anything, except to love each other.” What does it mean to have an ongoing “debt of love” to others? How does this compare to financial or other obligations?
- Look at verse 9 where Paul lists several commandments summed up by “love your neighbor as yourself.” How does loving others fulfill these specific commandments? Can you think of examples from your own life?
- In verses 11–12, Paul creates urgency by saying “salvation is nearer to us now” and “the night is far gone; the day is at hand.” Why does Paul use this day/night imagery, and how should this awareness of Christ's return impact our daily choices?
- Compare with 1 Thessalonians 5:4–8 and Ephesians 5:8–14, where similar day/night imagery is used.

- Verse 12 tells us to “cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.” What specific “works of darkness” does Paul mention in verse 13, and why might these particular sins be highlighted?
- Consider Jesus’ words in Matthew 24:36–44 about being ready for His return. D.A. Carson addresses this dramatic imagery: “The contrast between ‘casting off’ works of darkness and ‘putting on’ the armor of light creates a vivid picture of decisive moral action. This isn’t a gradual, passive process but a deliberate, decisive choice to reject sin and embrace righteousness” (Carson, *For the Love of God*, Vol. 2).
- In verse 14, Paul gives the powerful command to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ.” What does it practically mean to “put on” Christ in your daily life? How does this connect to Paul’s teaching about baptism in Romans 6:3–4?
- Saint Augustine’s conversion came through this very verse. He recounts: “I opened the Scriptures and read the first passage on which my eyes fell (Romans 13:14)... No further did I wish to read, nor was there need. For instantly, as if by a light of serenity infused into my heart, all the shadows of doubt were scattered” (Augustine, *Confessions*, VIII.12).

## SHOW

Having explored Paul’s teaching on love fulfilling the law and the urgency of living in light of Christ’s return, we must now move beyond understanding to application. As C.S. Lewis reminds us, “It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the next world that they have become so ineffective in this one” (Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, p. 134). Let’s consider how we can live out these truths in practical ways.

- Based on our discussion of love fulfilling the law, identify one specific relationship in your life where you need to more intentionally “pay the debt of love” this week. What practical step will you take?
- We’ve discussed what it means to “put on Christ” and “make no provision for the flesh.” What is one specific area where you need to both “put off” something and “put on” Christ instead? Who can help hold you accountable in this?

# WEEK 31: ROMANS 14:1–15:7

## INTRODUCTION

Having explored how believers should relate to governmental authorities in the previous section, Paul now shifts his focus in Romans 14:1–15:7 to address conflicts threatening the unity of the Roman church. These disputes centered around “disputable matters” — primarily dietary practices and the observance of special days — that particularly divided Jewish and Gentile Christians. The tension for Paul’s original audience was profound: how could diverse believers with deeply held but differing convictions live in harmony as one body? For us today, the tension feels equally relevant as we navigate our own “disputable matters” in an increasingly polarized culture. Rather than declaring one side right and the other wrong, Paul provides transformative principles for maintaining unity amid diversity: mutual acceptance, respect for conscience, and prioritizing love over personal freedom. As we study this passage, we’ll discover that God’s design isn’t for uniform conformity but for Christ-centered unity that makes room for differences while keeping our focus on what truly matters — “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (14:17). Just as the early Roman church had to learn how to welcome one another as Christ had welcomed them, we too must discover how to live by faith in ways that honor God while building up our brothers and sisters in Christ.

## ROMANS 14:1–15:7 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. <sup>2</sup> One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. <sup>3</sup> Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. <sup>4</sup> Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand. <sup>5</sup> One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. <sup>6</sup> The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. <sup>7</sup> For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. <sup>8</sup> For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s. <sup>9</sup> For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. <sup>10</sup> Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; <sup>11</sup> for it is written, “As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.” <sup>12</sup> So then each of us will give an account of himself to God. <sup>13</sup> Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put



a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother. <sup>14</sup> I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. <sup>15</sup> For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died. <sup>16</sup> So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil. <sup>17</sup> For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. <sup>18</sup> Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. <sup>19</sup> So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. <sup>20</sup> Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats. <sup>21</sup> It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble. <sup>22</sup> The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves. <sup>23</sup> But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin. <sup>1</sup> We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. <sup>2</sup> Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. <sup>3</sup> For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, “The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.” <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup> Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

## **DAILY PERSONAL STUDY: ROMANS 14:1-15:7**

### **Day 1**

Read Romans 14:1–4 carefully. Paul addresses how believers should handle “disputable matters” and introduces the categories of the “weak” and the “strong” in faith. Reflect on how these categories aren’t about spiritual maturity but about different convictions on non-essential matters. How might you identify areas in your own life where you tend to be “weak” (having stricter convictions) or “strong” (exercising more freedom)? Compare this passage with 1 Corinthians 8:1–13, where Paul addresses similar issues.

### **Day 2**

Study Romans 14:5–9, focusing on Paul’s statement that whatever we do, we do “to the Lord.” Consider how this perspective transforms even our everyday choices into acts of worship. How might viewing your daily decisions through this lens—as ways to honor Christ—change your approach to areas of freedom?

Journal about one specific area where you could more intentionally honor the Lord through your choices this week.

### **Day 3**

Examine Romans 14:10–12 regarding judgment and the reality that each believer will give an account to God. Connect this to Paul's earlier teaching about judgment in Romans 2:1–11. How does the certainty of standing before God's judgment seat impact how you view and treat fellow believers who differ from you on secondary matters? Consider writing a prayer asking God to help you see others through His eyes rather than sitting in judgment over them.

### **Day 4**

Focus on Romans 14:13–23, particularly verse 17: "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." How does this statement realign our priorities in disputable matters? Compare this with Jesus' teaching about kingdom priorities in Matthew 6:33 and the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22–23. In what ways might you be getting distracted by non-essentials rather than focusing on kingdom values?

### **Day 5**

Reflect on Romans 15:1–7 and its call to follow Christ's example of self-sacrifice. Notice how Paul roots our treatment of others in Christ's work on our behalf: "Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you." How does this connect to the overall theme we've seen throughout Romans of God's grace transforming how we live? Consider Philippians 2:1–11 as a parallel passage, and journal about one practical way you can "bear with the failings of the weak" instead of pleasing yourself this week.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

### **KNOW**

In Romans 14:1–15:7, Paul addresses conflicts in the Roman church over "disputable matters" — particularly dietary practices and observance of special days that divided Jewish and Gentile Christians. These questions help us explore our own experiences with differences of opinion and acceptance within community.

- Think about a time when you had a strong opinion that differed from others in your family or close community. How did you handle that difference? (This helps establish the theme of differences in community from Romans 14.)

- What's something you once felt very strongly about (perhaps a rule, practice, or belief) that you now see differently? What changed your perspective? (Relates to the disputable matters in Romans 14 and how our understanding can evolve.)

## **GROW**

Paul's teaching in Romans 14–15 provides transformative principles for maintaining unity amid diversity. He emphasizes mutual acceptance, respect for conscience, and prioritizing love over personal freedom. Let's explore how these principles apply in our lives today.

- Read Romans 14:1–4. Paul addresses two groups here: the “weak” and the “strong.” What characterizes each group, and how does Paul instruct them to treat one another?
- Look at Romans 14:5–9. What principle does Paul establish regarding disputable matters? How does he connect our individual choices to our relationship with Christ?
- In Romans 14:10–12, Paul reminds us of the coming judgment. How should this future reality impact how we treat fellow believers with whom we disagree? (Consider Philipians 2:3–4 and James 4:11–12 in your discussion.)
- Romans 14:13–19 shifts from what not to do (judge) to what we should do. What positive actions does Paul encourage, and what should be our priorities according to verse 17?
- In Romans 14:20–23, Paul gives a sobering warning about causing others to stumble. What principle does he establish in verse 23? How might this apply to issues in church life today?
- Read Romans 15:1–7. How does Paul connect our treatment of others in disputable matters to Christ's example? What specific instruction does he give to the “strong?” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer reminds us: “Christian community is not an ideal we have to realize, but rather a reality created by God in Christ in which we may participate. The more clearly we look to Christ in faith, the more clearly we'll see our unity with others despite our differences.” — *Life Together*, p. 30)

## **SHOW**

As we conclude our discussion, Paul challenges us to move from understanding to action. His final exhortation in Romans 15:7 sums up his teaching: “Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.” These questions help us apply these principles practically in our relationships.

- Is there someone in your life with whom you disagree on a secondary matter of faith? What specific step could you take this week to “welcome” them as Christ has welcomed you (15:7)?
- In which direction do you tend to error - being too judgmental of others' freedom or being insensitive to others' convictions? What practical boundaries might you need to set in your own life to avoid causing others to stumble while also embracing the freedom Christ offers?



# WEEK 32: ROMANS 15:8–21

## INTRODUCTION

As we continue our journey through Paul's letter to the Romans, we now turn to a passage that bridges Paul's practical instructions on unity (Romans 14–15:7) with his personal ministry plans (15:22–33). In Romans 15:8–21, Paul provides the theological foundation for the church's unity by reminding us of Christ's ministry to both Jews and Gentiles. For the original Roman audience—a diverse congregation of Jewish and Gentile believers navigating cultural tensions—these words offered profound reassurance that God's plan had always included both groups. Paul grounds this truth in Scripture, quoting four Old Testament passages that prophesied the inclusion of Gentiles in God's redemptive plan. For us today, this passage addresses similar tensions: How do we maintain unity amid diversity? How do we balance respecting our differences while centering on Christ? As Paul transitions to describing his own ministry, he models what Spirit-empowered service looks like—giving glory to Christ for all accomplishments and maintaining a pioneering spirit to reach those who haven't yet heard the gospel. Whether we're wrestling with cultural divisions in our churches, questioning our effectiveness in ministry, or wondering about God's faithfulness to His promises, Paul's words remind us that we can live by faith filled with power and hope—the same power that fueled Paul's ministry from Jerusalem to Illyricum.

## ROMANS 15:8–21 (ESV)

<sup>8</sup> 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, <sup>9</sup> 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."<sup>10</sup> And again it is said, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people."<sup>11</sup> And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him."<sup>12</sup> And again Isaiah says, "The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope."<sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God. <sup>18</sup> 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, <sup>19</sup> 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; <sup>20</sup> 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,<sup>21</sup> but as it is written, "Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand."*

## **DAILY PERSONAL STUDY: ROMANS 15:8–21**

### **Day One**

Read Romans 15:8–12 carefully. Paul emphasizes Christ's ministry to both Jews ("the circumcised") and Gentiles, showing how this fulfills God's promises. How does this dual purpose of Christ's ministry reveal God's character and plan? Consider how this connects to the theme of "living by faith" we've been exploring throughout Romans. Journal about how understanding God's faithfulness to both Jews and Gentiles might strengthen your own trust in His promises.

### **Day Two**

Focus on Romans 15:13's prayer for hope, joy, peace, and the Holy Spirit's power. How does this benediction serve as a bridge between Paul's theological arguments and his personal ministry plans? Compare this with other passages about the Spirit's role in producing fruit in believers' lives (Galatians 5:22–23, Ephesians 1:13–14). Reflect on which aspect of this prayer—hope, joy, peace, or power—you most need in your life right now.

### **Day Three**

Study Romans 15:14–16's description of Paul's ministry using priestly language. What does it mean for Paul to serve as a "minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel"? How might this metaphor apply to your own service in God's kingdom? Consider how this connects to Paul's earlier teachings about offering ourselves as "living sacrifices" in Romans 12:1–2. Journal about areas where God might be calling you to serve others as part of your "priestly service."

### **Day Four**

Examine Romans 15:17–19 regarding the source of Paul's ministry effectiveness. Note how he emphasizes Christ's work through him "by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God." How does this compare with Paul's earlier statements about living in the Spirit in Romans 8:1–17? Reflect on how your own service for God might be more fully empowered by His Spirit rather than your own strength.

## Day Five

Reflect on Romans 15:20–21's description of Paul's ambition to preach where Christ had not been named. How does this missionary strategy connect to Paul's understanding of his particular calling? Consider how Paul's application of Isaiah 52:15 shows his understanding of his role in God's redemptive plan. As you think about your own calling, journal about where God might be directing you to serve—whether in pioneer contexts or building on existing foundations—and how you can move forward in faith.

## DAILY PRAYER FOR THIS WEEK

Father, thank You for faithfully fulfilling Your promises in Christ. Fill me with the joy, peace, and hope that comes through believing, by the power of Your Holy Spirit. Help me to see my life as a priestly offering to You, serving others through Your strength, not my own. Give me clarity about my calling and boldness to share Your gospel where You've placed me. May I live by faith, trusting in Your power to work through my weakness. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### KNOW

In Romans 15:8–21, Paul articulates how Christ's ministry fulfills God's promises to both Jews and Gentiles, providing a theological foundation for unity in the church and Paul's own missionary vision. This passage reminds us that our hope is rooted in God's faithfulness and empowered by His Spirit. Let's begin by reflecting on how these themes might connect with our own experiences.

- Share a time when someone's words or actions gave you hope during a difficult season. How did that experience affect your faith journey?
- What's the most challenging cultural barrier you've ever had to overcome (in travel, relationships, work, etc.)? What did you learn from that experience?

### GROW

In this passage, Paul weaves together several key themes: Christ's fulfillment of God's promises, the inclusion of Gentiles in God's redemptive plan, and the Spirit-empowered nature of effective ministry. These truths form the foundation for both unity in the church and our mission to the world.

- Read Romans 15:8–9. How do these verses reveal Christ's dual purpose in ministering to both Jews and Gentiles? What do they teach us about God's character?
- In verses 9–12, Paul quotes four Old Testament passages to show God's intention to include Gentiles in His redemptive plan. Why do you think Paul



used so many Scripture references here? How does this strengthen his argument for unity?

- Compare these verses with God's original promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3 that "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."
- Looking at verse 13, what is the connection between believing, joy, peace, hope, and the Holy Spirit's power? How have you experienced these elements working together in your own life?
- In verses 14–16, Paul describes his ministry using priestly language. What does it mean for Paul to be "a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God"? How does this imagery help us understand our own role in sharing the gospel?

## **SHOW**

As we've seen, Paul's ministry was characterized by dependence on the Spirit's power, a commitment to reaching the unreached, and a vision for unity across cultural boundaries. Now let's consider how these principles might shape our own lives and ministries in practical ways.

- Paul was passionate about bringing the gospel to those who had never heard. Identify one specific person or group in your sphere of influence who needs to hear about Christ, and commit to taking a step toward sharing with them this week. How will you approach this opportunity?
- Paul relied on "the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God" (v.19) rather than his own abilities. What is one area in your life where you need to stop relying on your own strength and actively depend on the Holy Spirit's power? What would that look like practically?

# ***RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:***

- *Romans 8–16 For You* by Timothy Keller — <https://a.co/d/dyzadVr>
- *Knowing the Bible: Romans* by Jared Wilson — <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/course/knowning-bible-romans>
- *Exalting Jesus in Romans* by Tony Merida
- *Romans: A Concise Guide to the Greatest Letter Ever Written* by Andrew David Naselli — <https://www.amazon.com/Romans-Concise-Greatest-Letter-Written/dp/1433580349>



to them who are unde  
may be stopped, and "a  
by before God.  
by the deeds of the law  
d in his sight: for "

*Appeal to you therefore,  
brothers, by the mercies of God,  
to present your bodies as a living  
sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God,  
which is your spiritual worship.*



ely "by his grace, "thru  
n Christ Jesus :  
llset forth "to be a propiti  
s blood, to declare his rig  
ssion of "sins that are pe  
of God ;  
at this time his right