



## **Introduction to Romans 15:5-7**

Romans is often considered the most theologically rich of Paul's letters. In it, he explores the utter sinfulness of all humanity and our deserved punishment—the wrath of God. He proclaims God's provision of righteousness through Jesus Christ, our union with Him by faith, the work of the Holy Spirit in renewing us and sustaining us, and many other glorious truths.

And yet, Romans is also immensely practical. Not only does the deep theology have tremendous ramifications for us as individuals, but Paul speaks with relative precision about how we ought to live with one another in light of the grace of God that has been given to us in Jesus.

### **Context**

The immediate context of our passage begins in 14:1 (Notice: “accept him...”). Paul has just concluded a section, in chapters 12-13, discussing the need to love one another in the church. Now he turns to the specific love demonstrated in overcoming social barriers to fellowship—namely food laws which separated Jews and Gentiles. This section concludes in 15:13 with Paul making another prayer request for joy and peace amongst the Christian community in Rome.

### **Structure**

- I. Prayer Request (5)
- II. Purpose (6)
- III. Exhortation (7)



## Discuss

- 1) Are you more introverted or extroverted? How does that impact the way you view and participate in Christian community?
- 2) What are some things that cause divisions in the church? How does this passage speak to those divisions? And how does unbiblical division impact our witness as a church?
- 3) This passage affirms that God's primary means of giving us encouragement and endurance is through the Scriptures. How has God encouraged you to love others through the Scriptures?
- 4) What does it look like for you to practice hospitality? Who are some people in our church to whom you could show hospitality?
- 5) Christian community is ultimately about the glory of God. How does that impact the way you view your participation in church or in a smaller group?

**Go Deeper** (This section is especially for leaders to consider as they prepare for the Growth Group meeting)

Gospel Connections: We often think of the gospel in terms of our personal salvation from sin because of Christ's death on the cross, and of our peace with God that results. Certainly these are glorious truths that should be shouted from the rooftops! But we would be anemic in our understanding of the gospel if we did not also understand the implications for how we relate to one another as fellow Christians in the context of Christian community. The gospel also means we have peace with one another (Eph. 2:11-22)! While race, ethnicity, socioeconomic standing, and many other things may be dividing lines between people which the world draws, they do not exist in the church. We are all one in Christ. This, too, is a glorious truth that should be proclaimed and lived-out in the church!

Whole Bible Connections: In the Old Testament, which really indicates "old covenant," God chose a biological family to call His people—the family of Abraham's grandson, Jacob. Jacob's sons constituted the patriarchs of the twelve tribes of Israel. Once they left Egypt and entered the promised land, they were governed by an *external* constituting document commonly called the Law or Torah (Genesis-Deuteronomy). This constitution gave them a pattern for governance, for life together, and for how the community could enter the presence of God (only the high priest on the Day of Atonement). What we have as God's people in Jesus, under the new covenant, is a common *internal* desire for Jesus, a mutual obedience to Him from the heart (Romans 6:17), whereby all of God's people share a common spiritual life together. The bond that Christians share between one another is stronger than any biological/familial bond on earth.

Theological Connections: The church is always pictured in Scripture as a single person. The most common images are the "body" or "bride" of Christ. In each case, the assumption is that the unity among Christians in the church resembles the kind of unity

with which a single human body operates together. While we all play different roles, the spirit of unity that exists among us should be evident in such a way that we operate as one literal body.