

Harmony for the Glory of God Romans 15:5-7

Question: What do these verses teach regarding the importance of the instructions that came earlier in chapters 14 & 15?

In chapter 14, the apostle gave instructions for how believers he terms “strong” (15:1) and “weak” (14:1; 15:1) are to relate to one another in the body of Christ.

He has not been teaching how one is to form his convictions, but rather how to treat brothers and sisters who have different convictions than you.

Though Paul has not stated this, in some instances, the “weak” should mature over time and become “strong.” Consider the issue of the Mosaic food laws. The NT teaching that the Jewish believer is free from these laws is important. These laws are no longer applicable, for God’s purpose now is that Jewish believers will go into Gentile homes with the gospel (Acts 10-11), and that Jewish and Gentile believers be joined into one body having fellowship with one another (Gal 2; Eph 2:11-22). If a Jewish believer’s conscience troubles him over going into a Gentile home or eating with Gentile believers, he needs to have his conscience informed by the Word of God. This may take time, but he should become “strong” in faith in this area as he matures in Christ.

In other instances, being “weak” is not to be seen as immaturity. Consider the issue of drinking alcohol. Some believers have convictions against drinking alcohol because they understand it could lead to the sin of drunkenness, various temptations, and ruin. Such a conviction could come from wisdom and maturity.

In Biblical decision-making, there is more to consider than the lawfulness of something.

- **1 Cor. 6:12** “All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated by anything.
- **1 Cor. 10:23–24** “All things are lawful,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful,” but not all things build up. Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor.

One area of the instruction in Romans 14 was that we are to seek the spiritual good of our brothers and sisters, even if that means denying myself something that is lawful.

Now in 15:1-13, the apostle is concluding his teaching on how the weak and the strong are to relate.

Prayer for harmony unto the glory of God (5-6)

Paul does not only exhort, but here prays for harmony in the church

- Without the empowering grace of God, exhortation will not bear fruit

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Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version (ESV).*

Paul addresses God as, “the God of endurance and encouragement”

1. God is the source of these
2. He gives these through the Scriptures (**verse 4**)

Paul prays that God may “grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus”

1. Harmony in submitting to Christ’s revealed will and following His example (**verse 3**)
2. Lit, **NASB** “grant you to be of the same mind with one another...”
3. Not that we would have the same “opinions” about all things (14:1), but that our minds would all be focused on what Christ would have us all focus upon
4. This unity of mind is expounded in **Philippians 2:1-11**

The purpose is “that together you may with one voice glorify” God

1. **NASB 2020** “that with one purpose and one voice you may glorify” God
2. **NIV** “that with one mind and one voice you may glorify” God
3. United in mind and voice in glorifying God
4. Exemplified in Acts
 - **Acts 1:14** All these **with one accord** were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.
 - **Acts 4:23–24** When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. And when they heard it, they **lifted their voices together** to God...

The church’s ultimate purpose is to “glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”

1. To honor Him and make Him known as the great and wonderful God that He is
2. When we “quarrel over opinions” (14:1) we are sidetracked from what really matters

Question: When we are not united in the way Paul has instructed and for which Paul is praying, what do we exalt rather than God?

God is worthy of being glorified by a united church!

This can only come about by God’s empowering grace, which is why Paul leads us in praying for it

Instruction to reflect Christ in accepting one another (7)

Question: What does it mean that Christ has "welcomed" us (verse 7)? Think of earlier teaching in this epistle.

This instruction takes us aback to the instructions in **14:1-3**

Not only has God the Father welcomed the believer, but Christ also has welcomed him

NASB 1995 "Therefore, **accept** one another, just as Christ also **accepted** us to the glory of God."

As we saw in our study of 14:1, this is an instruction to accept fellow believers with warmth into full fellowship. It is accepting one another with all the love and concern that should typify brothers and sisters.

- This is the opposite of forming divisions in the church.

We are instructed to welcome/accept one another "as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God"

1. He did so when we were justified by God's grace. Christ welcomed us to Himself.
2. This is a gracious acceptance
3. Christ's gracious welcoming of us brings glory to the Father

When Christ has accepted someone to the glory of God, are we to say that we will not?

The members of God's family are chosen and brought into it by God. We have no say in this matter and must instead welcome whomever God chooses.¹

John MacArthur: "Failure to accept one another in love and compassion is an affront to the Savior who accepted us. A congregation that is divisive, quarrelsome, contentions, and judgmental gives the world reason to ridicule Christ's church and to reject the One who is their only hope of salvation."²

Conclusion

We should pray for the unity in glorifying God for which Paul prayed

We should examine ourselves to see how we need to grow in welcoming/accepting one another as Christ has welcomed us

¹ James Montgomery Boice, *Romans*, 4:1815.

² MacArthur, *Romans 9-16*, 319.