

Lesson 32 – Romans 15:1-13

After spending substantial time discussing the need to care for one another and eliminate the tendency to judge each other, Paul recognizes the Holy Spirit's intention to address the matter of general selflessness. As the people of God, we must be a people who take our eyes off of serving ourselves, to see to the needs of others while we serve God. The old preachers used to say, "We are the hands and feet of our Savior in this world."

An appeal to selfless service – 1-2

Look to help those who are incapable. The context is progressing from chapter fourteen where immature Christians are troubled over lifestyle issues that seem ungodly, especially according to standards established in the Law. These are now identified as *the weak*. If you understand, and are enjoying spiritual liberation because of Christ, you ought to help those who are not in the same place. Our focus isn't on living it up in selfishness, but assisting those who must learn about liberty so they too can enjoy that freedom. How would we do that? A few ideas:

1. Teach them sound doctrine that helps them understand their liberty.
2. Exemplify grace in appreciating the liberty of others, not condemning any activity of which you are personally opposed. (This doesn't include sinfulness.) IE. I don't see how I could ever dance with anyone other than Ana, but some Christians have a great time at social dances with other partners.
3. Compromise on your liberty for the sake of their immaturity, but teach them.

An example of selfless service – 3-7

Christ. By natural process, the suffering we undergo is actually felt most acutely by our Savior. Like the last person in a line with electrical current streaming through. We most certainly feel the sting of people's insults, but Christ is the one really being insulted. The point is, He is willing to take those hits for us, shielding us from the potentially fatal attacks so we can walk on.

Now the Old Testament writing was instructional for us, and if we will live according to what it taught us, we are encouraged, and filled with hope. We then take that encouragement and hope and apply it to life with an outcome of peace and harmony in community, and God's glory becomes a collective effort. So then, we welcome more participants to that work and life, for in a growing crowd of worshippers there is great encouragement and hope.

The extent of selfless service – 8-13

The Jews benefit in that they see the fulfillment of God's promises to the patriarchs. The Gentiles benefit in that they see the mercy of God and in turn give Him glory. Paul quotes from six Old Testament texts as he accentuates the point that the Gentiles would be able and willing to praise God for His goodness and mercy.

This prompts Paul to make one final blessing, "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."