

One Another

Lesson 4: Accept One Another as Christ Accepted You -- Romans 15:1-7

Think of the last time someone truly welcomed you. Not the polite nod at the door, but the deep welcome of someone who opened their life and made room for you, who took you in with all your rough edges and awkwardness and was genuinely glad you came. There is nothing quite like it. To be welcomed like that is to feel, for a moment, that you belong, that you are not a problem to be managed but a person to be loved. Most of us are starving for that kind of welcome, and most of us are stingy about giving it.

The church in Rome was a congregation that found welcoming one another hard. Jewish believers and Gentile believers sat in the same assembly, but they came from worlds apart. They disagreed about food, about holy days, about a hundred matters of conscience that felt enormous at the time. The “strong” looked down on the “weak” as overly scrupulous, and the “weak” judged the “strong” as careless. It would have been the easiest thing in the world for that congregation to fracture along those lines. And into that real, tense, divided room Paul writes one of the most beautiful commands in all his letters.

Then comes the command. “Accept one another,” he says, “just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.” Notice the measure. Not “accept one another as much as they deserve,” not “accept one another once they have your views straightened out.” Accept one another as Christ accepted you. And how did Christ accept us? Not when we were sorted out and impressive, but when we were weak, ungodly, and at odds with him. He welcomed us at the cost of his own blood. Paul reaches all the way back to Calvary to set the standard for how we treat the brother across the aisle.

Before he gives the command, Paul shows us the model. “We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves,” he writes, and then points to Jesus: “For even Christ did not please himself.” There it is. The whole of the Christian life under one heading: a Savior who set aside his own comfort and preference to bear our burdens and welcome us home. As we study these verses, we are learning to make room for one another the way room was made for us, to bear with one another’s weakness, and to welcome each other so fully that the watching world looks at our unity and gives glory to God.

Group Discussion: In our culture, acceptance often means simply agreeing with whatever someone does or believes. How is the acceptance Paul commands here both warmer than that and more demanding than that, given that Christ accepted us without ever softening his call to holiness?

Personal Reflection: Who is the brother or sister you find it hardest to fully accept, the one you tolerate but keep at a distance? As you begin this lesson, what would it mean to measure your acceptance of them not by their worthiness but by how Christ accepted you?

Read Romans 15:1-7

Study Questions

1. Paul writes, “We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves” (Romans 15:1). What does it reveal about the gospel that strength in the church is defined not by being served but by bearing with and serving the weaker?
2. Be honest about where you stand. In some matters you are the “strong” and in others the “weak.” Where have you used your strength, your knowledge, your freedom, or your maturity, to please yourself and look down on a weaker brother rather than to bear with him? Name one concrete instance.
3. Paul says, “Each of us should please our neighbor for their good, to build them up” (Romans 15:2). How is this God-honoring desire to please our neighbor different from sinful people-pleasing, and what is the goal that keeps it healthy?
4. Examine your own motives in how you treat others. Where does your effort to please people flow from a fear of their disapproval rather than from love that seeks their good? Name one relationship where you need this difference sorted out.
5. Paul grounds everything in Christ: “For even Christ did not please himself” (Romans 15:3). How does the example of Jesus, who set aside his own comfort and bore reproach for us, define the entire shape of the Christian life together?

6. Look honestly at your week. Where did “pleasing yourself” quietly govern your choices in the church family, your preferences in worship, your comfort, your schedule, your opinions? Name one place where following Christ’s example would mean laying your own preference down.

7. Paul says the Scriptures “were written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope” (Romans 15:4). What does this teach us about the purpose and abiding authority of the Scriptures for Christians today?

8. Consider your own intake of the Word. Where are you starving the very endurance and hope God means to give you by neglecting the Scriptures, and where is a present struggle actually a place God wants to teach you through his Word? Name one concrete change.

9. Paul concludes, “Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God” (Romans 15:7). How did Christ accept us, and how does measuring our acceptance of one another by his acceptance of us guard us from both cold rejection on one side and a soft tolerance that abandons holiness on the other?

10. Look back across Romans 15:1–7 as a whole: bearing with the weak, not pleasing ourselves, Christ as our model, the Scriptures giving hope, and accepting one another for the glory of God. Name one specific way you sense Jesus calling you to grow in welcoming his people through this passage, and what concrete step you will take this week.

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Romans 14:1–4, where Paul commands the strong to welcome the one whose faith is weak without quarreling over disputable matters, for God has accepted him; Philippians 2:3–8, where we are to look to the interests of others, having the mind of Christ, who did not grasp his rights but emptied himself; Ephesians 4:1–3, where we are urged to walk worthy of our calling with all humility and patience, bearing with one another in love; Colossians 3:12–14, where as God’s chosen ones we put on compassion, kindness, and patience, bearing with and forgiving one another as the Lord forgave us.