



# Finer Grounds Bible Study

## Romans

### Lesson 23: Romans 15:1-13

As we begin chapter 15 Paul is going to be culminating everything he has been saying for the last several chapters. He is going to bring together the idea of the strong bearing with the weak and the beauty of God’s plan for both the Jews and the Gentiles. How do these ideas fit together? How can people from such vastly different backgrounds and worldviews be unified? Because of Jesus Christ.

**Before you begin, read 15:1-13 and mark any key words or phrases that you find.**

#### Read Romans 15:1

When doing Bible study, it is important to remember that all of the verse/chapter breaks have been added by men. For instance, this is an example of a really horrible chapter break. Paul is continuing the exact same thought he has been focusing on from the beginning of chapter 14, but it’s easy to miss the context because our minds automatically hiccup at the break.

Thinking back to our last few lessons: Paul is using the analogy of strong and weak to describe those who believe it is acceptable to eat meat (the strong) and those who abstain (the weak.) He isn’t using these terms in any type of derogatory way; he is simply differentiating between those whose faith has matured enough to be able to clearly distinguish between matters of opinion and doctrine and those who still struggle in this area.

He is reiterating to his readers that maturity is not a license to do whatever you want, but rather the opposite. As a more mature Christian it is your responsibility to bear with those consciences are pricked by matters of opinion in order to

ensure that they aren’t made to stumble (sin) by violating their conscience. The word “failings” here can also be understood as “struggles” or “weakness.” To “bear with” literally means to “hold up.” Paul his telling us that if we are a more mature Christian, it is our responsibility to support and strengthen our weaker brethren, and to put their needs ahead of our desires.

**What are some specific ways we should “bear with” our weaker brethren?**

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#### Read Romans 15:2-3

Although he has been focusing primarily on the responsibilities of the strong to the weak, with the word “each” Paul brings this around to both parties. Regardless of whether we are the strong or the weak God expects us to look to the needs of others and build each other up. Why? Because that’s exactly what Jesus did. Here Paul quotes Psalm 69:9 which is a powerful reminder: Jesus humbly, willingly took on the reproach that was intended for us. The reproach that we deserved when He certainly did not. Yet we sit and fight and demand our own way over matters of opinion? This attitude is completely contradictory to the mindset the entire letter of Romans has been teaching that God expects of us.

**Are you intentional about building up your brethren? How can you improve in this area?**

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## Read Romans 15:4-7

**According to these verses why have the Old Testament scriptures been preserved for us?**

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**What two things does Paul say will give us hope?**

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It is beautiful to note that Paul the two things Paul states will give us hope are also the two words he uses to describe our God. At the same time, it is also humbling to note that in verse five Paul directly ties our unity with each other to our unity in Christ Jesus. In recent times the idea of being a Christian without being a part of the church or being a Christian while having animosity with other believers has gained a lot of traction. However, the truth is that this idea is completely contrary to Scripture. There is no Christianity without the church, and there is no way to be unified with Christ and divided with our brethren. Our relationship with our brethren is a direct reflection of our relationship with Christ (once again, why 12:18 tells us to do our part to be at peace with all.)

I absolutely love the imagery created by verse six! My favorite thing in the world is to be surrounded by brethren singing their hearts out in praise to their Creator. In fact, as I write this, I have absolute joy because I'm listening to a group of teenagers sitting around my dining room table singing praise. The church, at its core, is to be a unified group of believers glorifying God the Father and our Messiah. Just stop, pause for just a minute and imagine what it would be like if we were truly so unified! This sisters, this is why the first century church was able to turn the world

upside down (Acts 17:6)! If we focused as much effort on what Paul has been teaching us as we do on being hurt and offended, we could absolutely do the same thing today! Sisters, let us heed the words of Paul and welcome each other as Jesus has welcomed us!

**Is there someone you have not been living in love with? Is there someone for whom you have been more of a discouragement than an encouragement?**

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If so please don't wait, do your best to reconcile with that person today!

## Read Romans 15:8-13

This is a larger chunk than we usually focus on at once, however it is a continuous thought process. This is also where Paul "puts the nail in the coffin" so to speak on their arguments for remaining divided as Jews and Gentiles. Throughout this section he uses quote after quote from the Old Testament to emphasize once again that, with an emphatic yes, God's plan was always to include the Gentiles in salvation.

**Paul gives three specific reasons that Christ became a servant, what are they?**

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**How do these three reasons apply to us today?**

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**Given the struggles the church at Rome is facing, what is the ironic theme of the passages Paul quotes here?**

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I love the meaning of the word “fill” in verse 13. It carries the idea of filling a previously hollow space. How many people go to extreme measures in an effort to find meaning in their lives? How many people try to numb the emptiness in their lives with addictive behavior? Sisters, the Creator of the universe wants to fill us with joy, peace and hope!

Does this mean that life is always perfect for the Christian? Or that Christians never struggle to find their place or with feelings like isolation or depression? In the words of Paul, “by no means!” But what it does mean is that even in those dark moments we are not alone! Even in those dark moments we have hope! Even in those dark moments, when the church is operating as it should, we have brothers and sisters in Christ and a Savior who are waiting to fill us up if we will lean on them. As Christians, we are never alone!

**Is there someone in your life who is struggling to find joy or peace? Reach out to them and encourage them this week. Are you the one who is struggling to find joy or peace? If so, first of all pour your struggles out to the Almighty in prayer, and then be honest with a sister in Christ about your struggles so that she can help “bear your burden” in Christ.**

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