



Christian Life Fellowship

Becoming fully devoted followers of Christ



Developing Christian Selflessness

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Introduction:

We are coming to the end of our series on **Romans**. I have enjoyed our study and I trust not only has it blessed your understanding of the position believers have in Christ, but I pray it has helped you become a more devoted follower of Christ. The material I have found helpful in this series is from a book by Warren Wiersbe entitled **BE RIGHT**.

As we come into this final stretch of his letter, Paul deals with the stronger saints and points out a basic problem. Every follower of Christ must deal with this problem. It is *selfishness*.

I. Dealing with self for the sake of others (15:1-7)

The love of God that fills our hearts as devoted followers of Christ is not selfish. It seeks to share with others and make them happy. It is even willing to carry along younger followers. When you read the **13th chapter of First Corinthians**, the standard for love becomes crystal clear. All of the things that are talked about in that chapter, rudeness, pride, boastfulness, easily angered, impatience, envy, keeping a running record of wrongs, suspicious, gives up easily, are all traits of selfishness and immaturity.

The greatest example of love is the example of Christ Himself. Paul quotes from **Psalm 69:9** to prove this point. If we think that we are sacrificing something by giving up what we eat or drink, then measure that by the sacrifice of Christ. No sacrifice could ever equal Calvary. You can measure your own spiritual maturity by giving consideration to

what rights you might be willing to surrender so others might be helped. We do this not as a burden, but as a blessing. Just as a parent would set aside certain rights for the sake of a child, so the mature believer is willing to sacrifice to help a younger believer grow in faith. There are two sources of spiritual power if we are to live to please others. They are the Word of God and prayer. Paul closed this section of his letter with praying for his readers that they might experience from God the unity of the Spirit that only He can give.

The local church is to major in the Word of God and prayer. The first real danger to the unity of the church was when the apostles were too busy to minister God's Word and pray. - **(ACTS 6:1-7)** When they found others to share the responsibility, the apostles returned to their function in ministry and the church experienced harmony and growth.

II. Ministry of Christ to the Gentiles - (15:8-13)

The example of ministry always must be Jesus Christ. He came first to minister to the Jewish people so that through them the Gentiles might find salvation. John the Baptist came to minister to the nation of Israel and prepare them for the coming Messiah. When Jesus began His ministry, it was first to the Jewish people. When Jesus sent out the disciples, it was first to the people of Israel. His major emphasis was on Israel.

After Jesus rose from death, He instructed His disciples to remain in Jerusalem and begin their ministry there. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus confirmed the promises that God made to Abraham. Some of these promises have already been fulfilled, but many others are yet to be fulfilled when Christ returns to establish His kingdom.

The first believers were Jews. We see a progression in the promises that Paul quoted in [verses 9-12](#).

The Jews glorify God (v.9)
The Gentiles rejoice with the Jews (v.10)
The Jews and Gentiles together praise God (v.11)
Christ will reign over the Jews and Gentiles (v.12)

The word “trust” at the end of [verse 12](#) should really be translated hope. We have hope as well as joy and power and peace. If there is one thing that people are looking for today it is hope; hope for a better life here and hope for an eternal life. Unless we understand the ministry of Paul, we will not fully appreciate the message of God’s grace.

III. PAUL’S MINISTRY TO THE GENTILES (15:14-24)

A. It was received by grace. (15:14-15)

As Saul the Rabbi, he knew nothing of God’s grace. He sought to destroy the church and persecute believers. When Paul met Jesus on the road to Damascus, he experienced the grace of God. It was because of that experience that his life changed dramatically and he was called to be an apostle.

B. It was centered in the gospel.

Paul used two different words for minister in this verse. The emphasis was on priestly service. Paul regarded himself as a priest at the altar offering up to God the Gentiles he had won to Christ.

Ministry is service. When we serve people, we are serving God. Paul looked at his preaching as his priestly duty. This insight adds dignity and responsibility to our service. It was vital that priests only offer up to God that which was the best. Winning souls to Christ is a priestly ministry, a sacred obligation. It is necessary that we serve God with dedication and devotion just like the priests in the Old Testament did.

C. It was done for God’s glory.

Paul boasts not in what his ministry consisted of, but he boasted in what the Lord had done. He did not serve and suffer as he did just to make a name for himself; he did so to bring glory to Jesus Christ.

D. It was done by God’s power.

It was the Holy Spirit who empowered Paul to minister and enabled him to do mighty signs and wonders. The miracles that God gave Paul were signs in that they came from God and revealed God to others. They also aroused in people a sense of wonder, but their purpose was always to prepare the way for the ministry of the Word. Miracles were given to validate and authenticate the message and the messenger. It was by both the Word and deed that the gospel message was propagated. We are still to take the gospel to people and God is still using the miraculous today to validate the message and the messenger.

E. It was by God’s plan.

God had a special plan for Paul to follow. He was not to preach where any other apostle had ministered. Paul covered about 1,400 miles. When you think about the slowness of travel and the dangers associated with it in Paul’s’ time, we get a grasp of the magnitude of his achievement in his missionary journey.

Paul was so focused on his mission that he could have visited Rome sooner, but he rose to the challenge of completing his task. He took the gospel, raised up believers and left behind witnessing churches to carry on the work. He finished one job before he started another one.

IV. THE GENTILES' MINISTRY TO THE JEWS -(15:25-33)

A special offering had been sent from the Gentile churches in Greece for the suffering Jewish saints in Jerusalem. There were several purposes behind this offering:

- It was first of all **an expression of love**.
- Secondly, it meant **practical relief** at a time when the poor Jewish believers needed it the most.
- Third, it **helped to unite Jews and Gentiles** in the church. It was a bond that brought them closer together.

Paul looked on this offering as the paying of a debt. The Gentiles had received spiritual wealth from the Jews. Now they returned material wealth, thus "paying their debt". Paul considered himself a debtor to the whole world. He also considered the Gentile

Conclusion:

We are to minister to one another and to those who don't even know Christ. As we conclude this study in Romans, it should make us more stable in our faith and more excited to share Christ with others. The result is: "To the only wise God, be glory through Jesus Christ forever!"

Christians debtors to the Jews. This offering was both a payment of a debt and also fruit. It was not loot that Paul received from the churches. It was fruit. It was the natural result of their walk with the Lord. When the life of the Spirit flows through a church, giving is no problem. We can be stingy or we can be generous. We can give in faith or out of obligation. We can give joyfully or reluctantly. But when God's Spirit is working in a church, giving is not a problem and as a result, incredible things happen.

The word "struggle" in **verse 30** suggests an athlete giving his best in the contest. Perhaps the word "wrestle" better expresses the idea. This verse does not mean we must fight with God to get what we need; rather, it means our praying must not be a casual experience that has no heart or earnestness. We should put as much fervor into our prayers as a wrestler does in his wrestling.

In the **last chapter of Romans**, Paul greeted at least 26 people by name. He also greeted several churches that were meeting in homes. Paul was a friend-maker as well as a soul winner. He did not live an isolated life. He had friends and he appreciated them. These friends were a help to him personally as well as to his ministry.