

Introduction:

- Paul continues his discussion in chapter 15 of what he began in 14 about the 'weak' and 'strong' believers. Paul refers to the weak as those who do not eat meat, nor drink wine, and do not worship any given day of the week. The strong are those who have found freedom from such bondages. (Do note that the strong are not those who are making excuses to do such things.) Paul would not have embraced that thought process. The strong are mostly Gentiles who have never been under the Jewish law. They come into the Kingdom by faith alone! Therefore they have the most 'liberty.'
- In chapter 15 his language begins to shift or change from that of 14.
- The call of the first paragraph is a call to the 'strong' in Rome to assist with unity of the body of Christ.

I. Exhortations Unto Unity

- A. Be Considerate of others/the weaker vessels. 15:1
 1. Bastazo - to lift up, to bear, to carry away.
 2. What were the Pharisees accused of doing by Jesus? *"For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues,"* (Matthew 23:4-6, NKJV) The Pharisees/the strong were after three things in this passage.
 - a) attention vs 4
 - b) position vs 5
 - c) recognition vs 6
 3. Jesus said, *"My yoke is easy and my burden is light."* He came to not to burden others but to help others. The goal of this action is unity...common unity...community!
- B. Live in Harmony/like minded 15:5
 1. It is not the word symphony like you might expect. It is the exhortation to live in agreement with the same kind of mind. Not agreeing to a set of rules but to a value that binds you together. It is the value of unity.
 2. Paul tell them to hold this value of unity using two things.
 - a) patient enduring. - the word carries the sense of lagging behind in order to help. It is not motivated by public opinion but by an internal motivation of love.
 - b) parakletos - paraclete - one who comforts, stands with, and will not abandon. This gives courage.
 - c) The goal of this action is unity...common unity...community!
- C. Accept Each Other 15:7
 1. Proslambano - to take to one's self. To accept. This was the message of 14:1
 2. When we do this it gives God the glory! vs7
 3. The goal of this action is unity...common unity...community!

II. Fruits of Hope, Joy and Peace

- A. Hope! Hope is having a confidence in what God will do!
 - 1. Jesus comes as servant to the Jews just as God prophetically promised. This gives the Jews hope!
 - 2. He also came so that the Gentiles would give glory to God! vs 9
 - 3. Together: note the progression in the scriptures that Paul quotes.
 - a) I will praise you among the Gentiles. Jews!
 - b) Rejoice with His people you Gentiles Gentiles!
 - c) Praise Him all you people of the earth. Together
- B. Scriptures give us hope. vs. 4. And along with that patience and encouragement.
- C. Jesus Give us hope. 15:12. Gentile will place their hope on him.
- D. The Jews have hope, the Gentiles have hope, and they get their hope from the same place! Therefore Bear up one another, be like minded, accept each other...for God is the source of all our hope!
 - 1. With that kind of hope we will be filled with Joy
 - 2. With that kind of hope we will be filled with peace
 - 3. All because we trust Him! Faith. And because we believe we will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- E. Paul continues, as you can see to stress the unity of the faith.
 - 1. His letter is coming to a close. He has stressed that righteousness is by faith alone. There is not other way than through Jesus. We all get to God by the same way. Therefore, live in unity. As members of the body of Christ you cant be divisive or separated ...or you die.