# Romans 15 – Finish the Race

Paul now starts to wrap up his letter to the Roman church. Considering the mixed congregation of Jews and Gentiles, Paul discusses the big picture of God's plan to share his mercy with all the world, and his personal calling to continue to break new ground for the gospel of Jesus. Paul also concludes the discussion about disputable matters and shows us the other side of that coin, encouraging us to be engaged in helping one another do what is right in the Lord so that others may be built up. What we see is Paul talking about finishing his race, and also showing us a key factor to finish ours well also.

## The Big Picture

Let's talk about Paul's mission first. In verse 8, Paul reminds this congregation which was a mix of Jewish and gentile believers, that God's plan was always to bring the world together into his house. He quotes the Torah (the first 5 books), the writings (history), the Psalms and the prophets to make his point clear; God has always wanted his house filled with people from the whole earth, through the gospel of faith in Jesus. NEXT SLIDE

> *Rom 15:8 For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, 9 and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written,*
>
> *"Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name."*[1]
>
> NEXT SLIDE
>
> *10 And again it is said, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people."*[2]
>
> *11 And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him."*[3]
>
> *12 And again Isaiah says, "The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope."*[4]
>
> *13 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**.*

Paul's focus is global; he wants to continue spreading the gospel among the nations so the whole world may understand the reason for the hope that we have.

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[1] 2 Samuel 22:50; Psalm 18:49
[2] Deut. 32:43
[3] Psalm 117:1
[4] Isaiah 11:10

- To be reconciled to God through faith in Jesus.
- To be given a new heart and new desires as we follow Christ, first in baptism and then every day of our new lives.
- To be transformed by the renewing of our minds by obedience to the Word of God.
- And to be brought together as one in the family of God. NEXT SLIDE

## Paul's Mission – No Place Left

Paul begins this letter by saying he has wanted to visit the church in Rome to evangelize there, and now he adds that he wishes to go beyond Rome to Spain as well to spread the gospel where it hadn't yet been heard.

> *Rom 15:19 by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ; **...** 23 But now that there is **no more place** for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to visit you, 24 I plan to do so when I go to Spain. I hope to see you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a while. 25 Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the Lord's people there. ... 28 So after I have completed this task and have made sure that they have received this contribution, I will go to Spain and visit you on the way.*

NEXT SLIDE

The work of Paul was to blaze new trails and open up new territory for the gospel. Paul's journey ultimately ended in Rome, with church fathers recording that he was beheaded in the time of Nero around 66 AD. But in his ~30 years of ministry he established the fledgling church, wrote letters which became half of our New Testament, and raised up leaders who carried on the work of the gospel such that it continues to grow even today. Let us not lose our focus on Jesus calling. $GC^2$. Love God, Love Each Other, Make Disciples.

## Glorify God with One Voice

NEXT SLIDE Going back to verse 1, Paul concludes the discussion about disputable matters that Kirk talked about last week. He then gives us the other side of the coin: how we, as followers of Jesus, should interact with one another.

> *Rom 15:1 We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. 2 **Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.** 3 For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me." 4 For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the*

*encouragement of the Scriptures **we might have hope.** 5 May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to **live in such harmony with one another**, in accord with Christ Jesus, 6 that together you may with **one voice** glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 7 Therefore **welcome one another** as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.*

Unity is a key theme here again; not uniformity, but unity. **Glorifying God with one voice.**

- Those who are strong bearing with the failings of the weak
- Looking for the building up of our neighbor, for his sake
- Living in harmony
- Welcoming one another just as Christ welcomed us
    - Imperfect
    - Works in progress
    - Hopeless apart from Christ's work in us.

Part of Jesus prayer on the night he was betrayed before going to the cross included this prayer for us, here today: NEXT SLIDE

*John 17:20 "I am praying not only for these disciples but also **for all who will ever believe in me** through their message. 21I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.*

Jesus looked ahead in time, and in his omniscience could see you, and me, and all of us here in 2026. His prayer for us was that we would glorify God with one voice. Why? So the world will believe.

How can we practice this here in Alliance in 2026?

- It starts with a heart for each other and for their good. We need to care about each other enough to leave our own comfort zones to help each other.
- We need to be intentional about welcoming others in. We do a good job at this, but we can always do better. We need to make the effort to connect with others and get to know them.
- We also need to drop our guards and let people get to know us. Have the courage to open up to others.
- Only then can we know how we can help one another.
- Take the initiative! Whether you have been here for decades or maybe only a few weeks, step out and ask someone to go out to lunch today (just not Chic-fil-A).

## Competent to Instruct

But, there is more to being in unity than simply not passing judgment on disputable matters. Tim Hawkins once joked that if you want a church where no one passes any judgment, you should go to the bar instead. There is a place, and a need, for us to help one another through loving instruction from the Word of God.

> *Rom 15:14 I myself am convinced, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness,* ***filled with knowledge and competent to instruct one another****. 15 Yet I have written you quite boldly on some points to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me 16 to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles. He gave me the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God,* ***so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit****.*

NEXT SLIDE Paul is showing us the balance here with the church, that we are to be welcoming, not judging each other on things that don't matter, while also giving to each other loving instruction that leads to transformative growth for us as individuals and for the church that Christ is building.

The word here, neuthetein[5] implies strong but gentle, clear biblical instruction. It is used a few times in the New Testament and is sometimes translated to admonish, to warn, or to instruct, to reprove gently. It involves reasoning and doctrinal and spiritual substance.

NEXT SLIDE Eight uses of the word in NT.

**A key role of shepherds/elders**

- Acts 20:31 – Paul's three-year ministry in Ephesus was marked by "warning each of you night and day with tears," revealing the blend of **urgency and compassion**.
- 1 Thessalonians 5:12 – Congregations are to **esteem leaders** "who admonish you," linking this kind of input to pastoral oversight.

**All believers play a role**

- Romans 15:14 – Paul affirms the Roman believers are "able also to instruct one another," showing **peer-to-peer** responsibility.
- 1 Thessalonians 5:14 – **brothers and sisters, warn** those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone.

[5] To admonish, warn, counsel, exhort. From the same as nouthesia; to put in mind, i.e. to caution or reprove gently. Especially *appeals to the mind*, supplying *doctrinal and spiritual substance* (*content*). This "exerts positive pressure" *on someone's logic* (*reasoning*), i.e. urging them to choose (turn to) God's best.

**Should be done as a loving family**

- 2 Thessalonians 3:15 – Discipline of the disorderly is to be firm yet **family-oriented**: "admonish him as a brother."
- 1 Corinthians 4:14 – Paul's corrective epistle is a **fatherly warning**: "I do not write this to shame you, but to warn you as my beloved children."

**Must come from scripture based teaching**

- Colossians 1:28 – Christ is proclaimed by "admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom," coupling **warning with doctrinal instruction**.
- Colossians 3:16 – When "the word of Christ dwells richly," believers "teach and admonish one another," indicating **Scripture-saturated** fellowship.[6]

NEXT SLIDE The goal is to help one another to become more like Christ, to build one another up for their good, and to become more pleasing to God. This is accomplished when we:

1. **Are Full of goodness** – it is a heart to build up and do what is best for others, to serve others and see them be who Christ calls them to be.
2. **Are Filled with knowledge** – not just head knowledge, but knowing the Word of God and how to apply it to life.
3. **Love each other as family** – whether fatherly or brotherly love. In other words, you may be a more mature believer or a peer, but the point is to do it kindly like you would with a family member.
4. **Have the Lord's urgency and compassion** – Paul did this day and night with tears.

**My testimony**

One significant experience me being admonished in this way happened about 30 years ago. There was a men's movement called Promise Keepers, and there was a group of us who went to some of the big conferences together. They talked about calling men to purity, and a group of us started to meet together to help each other overcome our struggle with lust and pornography.

After meeting together for a while, my good friend Gary Kerns, who has gone home to be with the Lord, challenged us all to not just come and confess, but to take seriously the command to be pure. To realize the harm we were doing to our wives and our relationship with God. He did it as a brother, but he did it with Scripture and with firmness. It was a turning point.

[6] From BibleHub

Later in my journey, I had relapsed with porn, and my wife confronted me. She admonished me to confess it to Paul Dykshoorn, who was the pastor at the time, and to deal with things biblically.

Both these confrontations were part of me getting free from my struggle with porn, to take the call to purity seriously, and to enlist the body of Christ for strength and accountability.

NEXT SLIDE **Where does our competence and knowledge come from?**

As noted above, the competence to do this comes from knowing how to apply the Word of God in real life. It is a Holy Spirit powered competence that is all about bringing life to others.

> *2 Cor 3:4 Such confidence we have through Christ before God. 5 Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. 6* ***He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant****—not of the letter but of the Spirit;* ***for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life****.*

NEXT SLIDE We've got to immerse ourselves in God's Word, and let it impact our hearts and minds.

> *Col 3:16 Let the word of Christ* ***dwell in you richly****, teaching and admonishing one another* ***in all wisdom****, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*

I love that phrase "dwell in you richly". It isn't just a knowledge of Scripture, which yeah, we have to start there, but it goes beyond knowledge to where it lives in us. It is ever present in our thinking, our decision-making, our reactions, our words. And we are then able to share that with others "in all wisdom". It is a truly beautiful thing.

NEXT SLIDE There is a real need for us to encourage and spur one another on. Why, because the world is full of trouble. Because we can be easily discouraged by sin, deceitfulness, and our own lack of perspective.

> *Heb 10:23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. 24* ***And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds****, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

Finally, we have to recognize we play a role in helping each other get to the finish line. As we spur each other on we help each other get down that road, overcome discouragement, cast of sin and weight. NEXT SLIDE And sometimes we need to help a brother or a sister get back on track so they can finish the race with Jesus.

> *Jam 5:19 My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, 20 remember this:* ***Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way*** *will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.*

Let's talk about what this looks like. Here's a sticky example. You see a brother drinking a beer at Grinders. Your conviction is that Christians should abstain from alcohol, especially in public, but what does the bible say? It clearly says that drunkenness is a sin, but it does not say it is a sin to drink in general. Now, there are other principles, as we have just seen in Romans 14, about not causing a brother to stumble. We should watch the context of our actions when making such decisions. What would you do? Ask yourself:

- Is this a biblical principle or just an opinion?
- Is it disputable with clear biblical context?
- Is it out of love for that brother, and the body of Christ?

NEXT SLIDE Another example. You find out a Christian brother at work is stealing from the company. Nothing big, just some supplies here and there. He didn't accidentally take a pen home; he is knowingly taking company property. Now this is more cut and dried and probably worth approaching, as a brother, in love, with gentleness, to say stealing is wrong. It breaks God's law, and shows you don't trust Jesus to provide for your needs.

In each situation, we need to pray, seek the Word of God, and be led by the Holy Spirit to do what He wants.

So let me try and tie this up. NEXT SLIDE

- We need to care about each other, reach beyond comfortable friendships to welcome and include those we haven't even met yet. Take the initiative to get to know one another.
- Let God's Word dwell in you. Listen to it, read it, immerse yourself in it.
- Love each other enough to want what is best for each other. **We NEED each other**.
- Finally If you see the need to confront someone
    - Use Scripture in context – this isn't about personal opinions
    - Make sure it is not a disputable matter.
    - Do it out of a heart of love, not just because someone annoys you
- The goal is to spur one another on, for their good.

Let's finish this race strong together! $GC^2$