

**Tuesday Evening Bible Study at Tokyo Baptist Church**  
**Paul's Letter to the Romans – Chapter 15:1-13**  
**Notes from Tuesday May 17, 2011**  
**Last Revised on May 23, 2011**

**Songs**

**Opening Prayer**

**Introduction**

This evening we continue our study of the Letter of Paul to the Romans.

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Last week we **finished** Chapter 14.

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Tonight we will begin **Chapter 15**.

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Once again, please note that we are coming very near to the **end** of our study of Romans.

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After tonight, we will need only another week or (at most) two to finish, which means we will definitely be finished with Romans before the end of **May**.

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Concerning our **survey** regarding the future of this class, the results seem rather clear. (Hand out survey results.)

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As you can see, there is a clear preference for **continuing** the class, with a study of **Revelation**.

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(Review survey results briefly.)

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The one other thing we need to discuss is when to begin the next class: whether immediately after Romans is finished, or on the first Tuesday in July, or some intermediate date. Let's decide before we go home this evening.

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OK, then. Before reading on into Chapter 15, I will briefly **review** what we have read before now.

**Review**

As we have repeatedly reminded ourselves,

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the **overall** theme of Paul's letter to the Romans is the **gospel**.

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The gospel is set forth briefly in the **first four (4) chapters** of this letter.

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In the **next** four chapters (i.e. Chapters 5 - 8), Paul examines some of the **implications** of the gospel, for those of us who are being **saved** by it.

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The third major section of this letter, consisting of **Chapters 9 through 11**, examines the rather **sad** history of the Jews who have **rejected** the gospel, but who have thereby served to manifest God's grace and mercy, and who are somehow the **ultimate object** of God's mercy, Paul says.

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It is on the basis of these "***mercies of God,***" set forth in the first **11** chapters, that Paul calls for proper Christian **behavior**, in the last major section of this letter, which runs from the beginning of **Chapters 12** through, lets say **Verse 13 of Chapter 15**.

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This is the section of the letter that we have recently **been** studying, and will **finish** this evening.

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Let's remember briefly what Paul has taught us, **so far** in this section, about Christian behavior.

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In the first Chapter of this section, **Chapter 12**, Paul asks his readers to stop being **conformed** to this world, but **instead** to allow God to **transform** them, by the renewing of their minds.

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He goes on to **describe** the transformed person, who is called to exhibit genuine **love** in all things, even to those who **persecute** him.

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In **Chapter 13**, Paul points out that the transformed Christian person willingly and gladly **pays** to governing authorities, and to all other groups and individuals, all of the **taxes**, **revenues**, **respect** and **obedience** due to them.

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We hold nothing back for ourselves, and in this way we promote **peace** in the church, and in the home, and in the world.

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The only **debt** we should owe to anyone, Paul says, is to **love** one another, and in this way we **fulfill** all of the **laws** and **commandments** that there are.

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In other words, all **sin** and **disharmony** are failures of **love**.

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In **Chapter 14**, which we finished last week, Paul picks up the thought that, among the **group** of Christian believers in Rome that he is addressing, some of them are **comparatively** stronger in faith than others, by which Paul here appears to mean that some of them have a comparatively better **understanding** of the gospel and its implications, and in particular

some have a comparatively better understanding of the extent to which the old laws regarding **ritual food purity** and **special days of religious observance** have been overtaken by the gospel.

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To these **strong** ones, Paul says, “**welcome** the weak and do **not** quarrel with them, over their opinions about food and days and etc.” and do not secretly despise them, either.

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To the **weak** (i.e. those with a lot of special religious rules) Paul says, do not look down on those who do not follow your **religious rules** and do not silently judge them.

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To both groups Paul says: it is **God** and not man who judges these things, and we must each stand alone before God and give an account of ourselves to Him. This is **one** thing that we all have in common!! So let’s help each other out, and not do anything to cause one another to stumble.

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This means setting **our** rights and preferences aside and behaving in accordance with the needs and the preferences of **others**, insofar as this is possible for us. If **they** think something is bad, then **we** don’t do it.

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Christ sets us free to **do** things and, also, **not** to do things in service of **love**. The loving thing **always** makes God happy, and it usually makes **men** happy too! So **peace** prevails.

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OK that’s my very quick review of everything we have studied so far in this class, through the end of **Chapter 14**.

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Does anyone have any comment or question before we read on?

### **Paul’s Letter to the Romans, Chapter 15, Verses 1-7**

OK, then, will someone please read Romans 15, Verses 1-7, in Japanese.

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Thank you. Will someone please read those same verses in English

- 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.

Thank you.

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Verse 1 reads:

(Verse 1)

**We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves.**

This is kind of a summary of much that has gone before.

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Paul says “*We who are strong...*”

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Which means he is including himself

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I don't think that Paul is being ironical --- i.e. he is genuinely speaking of a kind of strength that it is OK to claim for oneself without speaking nonsense or committing the sin of pride, or other sin.

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Q. Is there a reward for possessing such strength?

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A. No, at least not in the way the world thinks of reward.

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Rather, those who truly possess this kind of strength, are under an obligation, Paul says.

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Their obligation is to bear with the failings of those who are weak

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Q. Who are the weak of whom Paul is speaking?

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A. Principally he has in mind those who believe it is wrong to eat and drink certain things.

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A. Most of the “weak” to whom Paul is referring were probably Christians who grew up under the influence of Jewish culture.

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A. Paul himself may mean to generalize slightly, to include those who have other kinds of religious practices and taboos and we can carefully apply what Paul is teaching here somewhat generally.

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Q. In what sense are such religious practices and taboos are “**failings**”

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A. They fail to **understand** the **gospel**.

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A. They fail to understand that **love** is the only requirement.

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A. They fail to understand that God’s grace is **sufficient** and therefore they add superfluous rules and requirements of one kind or another..

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As we discussed last week, within the context of our own church, we can see things **like** that.

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There are probably some of **us** who have a few superfluous rules and requirements.

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When we insist on imposing these rules and requirements on others, we **are** the weak.

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When others seek to impose their rules and requirements on us, insofar as we are **strong**, we must submit to their superfluous requirements.

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The strong, then, may **seem** to be weak, because they do not insist on their own **rights**.

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They do not express their **own** preferences.

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They are concerned, **instead**, with the good of the **other**.

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Verse 2 continues

**(Verse 2)**

**Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.**

This is what the **strong** do.

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They do **not** seek to please themselves. They seek to please their **neighbor** instead.

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Or in other words, what **most** pleases the strong is what best pleases their **neighbor**.

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The last clause of Verse 2 is **important**,

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because it catches the thought that the ultimate objective of the strong for his neighbor is that

which “***builds him up***”

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Q. ***What*** is it that will build up your neighbor and ultimately please him the most?

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A. Salvation and **eternal life**!

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A. In this world the **hope**, and **peace**, and **joy** which belong only to the strong.

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Of course these are gifts that only **God** can give,

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but he gives them **through** us, if we are **strong**,

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and if we will put ourselves in **service** to the weak.

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rather than pleasing **ourselves**.

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In this we are following **Christ**.

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Verse 3 reads

**(Verse 3)**

**For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me."**

There are many things that Jesus **could** have done.

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But he set **aside** his **power**, his **authority**, his **dignity**, and finally his **life** for the benefit of all who are weak, and we are all weak in comparison to Him.

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As follows of Christ we are called to **imitate** him. And the student is not greater than his master.

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Q. How would any child of God, then, imagine that he is entitled to turn aside from his duty to serve and build up others in order to “**please himself**.”

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A. We **can not**. Paul is reminding us of this.

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Interestingly Paul presses this point home, **not** with a recollection of certain recent events from the life of Christ, but with a citation from the **Old Testament**.

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“...*as it is written*,” Paul says, “*The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.*”

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This is a quotation from **Psalms 69**, in which the **righteous sufferer** is speaking **to God**,

saying that he is suffering at the hands of those who have despised God

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Paul is reading this Psalm as referring to **Christ**, and his life and death of suffering at the hands of those who oppose God,

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If **Christ** would **not** turn aside even from **that**, then how would **we** justify turning from such modest self-sacrificial service as Paul is calling for here?! (e.g. to skip the meat course)

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Having just quoted from the Old Testament, to make his point concerning the gospel of Jesus Christ and its implications for present Christian behavior, Paul continues in **Verse 4**:

**(Verse 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.**

I believe that Paul means to say here, as he also says elsewhere, that the Old Testament scriptures are ultimately about **Christ** and were written **expressly** for the instruction of the Christian Church.

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It would be very wrong for any Christian to **fail** to revere any part of the Old Testament scriptures, or to fail to **draw** from them instruction, encouragement, and hope just as the godly people in Israel had always done.

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It would also have been very wrong for any Christian to suppose that any part of the Old Testament **contradicted** or **qualified** the gospel of Christ.

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These two tendencies (i.e. of being overly dismissive or improperly obsessed with Old Testament) may have been at the back of some of this strong and weak discussion that is before us here.

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I dare say some of this has survived down through the **centuries** until this very day.

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Paul aims to foster some **consensus** us here.

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Verse 5 reads

**(Verse 5)**

**May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus,**

There is only **one** God.

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He is called here variously the God of **endurance** and **encouragement** and **hope**.

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He is the God of **Israel** and the **Old Testament**.

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He is the God and father of our **Lord Jesus Christ**.

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Paul prays that this God will grant **unity** to the brothers and sisters in Rome,

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that is that they will be able to **live together** in **harmony**,

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a harmony that is also in accord with **Christ Jesus**.

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Such harmony is **necessary** of God is to be glorified.

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Verse 6 reads:

**(Verse 6)**

**that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

**Without** harmony, God cannot be glorified.

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And such harmony **cannot** be pretended.

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Artificial harmony is **hypocrisy** in part.

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**“Therefore,”** paul says in Verse 7

**(Verse 7)**

[Therefore] **welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.**

He is **still**, I suppose, speaking to the **“strong”**

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In any case, only the **strong** can **hear** and **respond** to this message,

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and only in proportion to the measure of their **strength**.

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In the kingdom of God, it is the **strong** who serve the **weak**.

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Questions or Comments?

**Paul’s Letter to the Romans, Chapter 15, Verses 8-13**



OK, then, will someone please read Romans 15, Verses 8-13, in Japanese.

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Thank you. Will someone please read those same verses in English

**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."**

**10 And again it is said, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people."**

**11 And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him."**

**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."**

**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.**

Thank you.

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Verse 8 reads

**(Verse 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,**

*"For I tell you..."* introduces a **solemn doctrinal declaration**

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and what Paul wishes to declare first of all is that God in Christ came and made himself a **servant, first and foremost** to the Jews, in fulfillment of the promises given to the patriarchs.

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Q. Who are the **patriarchs**?

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A. **Abraham**, **Isaac**, and **Jacob**

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**Yes**, and so price of **place** goes to the **Jews** whose history, is the history of the preparation of

the word for the coming of the **Son of God**, the coming of **God among men**.

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And pride of place goes to the **book** of the Jews which is **Old Testament scripture**, which is the very word of God,

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and as such is speaking always **ultimately** of the coming of the **Son of God and his Kingdom**.

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but the gentiles are not to be **excluded** from this kingdom..

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Verse 9 reads:

**(Verse 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."**

The promises *first* made to Abraham, and repeated, renewed, and expanded in subsequent generations within Israel, had **always** and **from the very beginning** made reference to the gentiles,

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where were expected to **glorify** God for his mercy,

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and only the **faithful** can glorify God!

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Which means that the **salvation** of the gentiles was **always** part of the plan.

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Verse 9 quotes from **Psalm 18** which is also referred to in **2 Samuel 22**

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The overall point here, I think, is that Paul is emphasizing the connection between *gentile Christians* and **Jewish scripture**, and showing that they fit together **seamlessly** and **eternally**.

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Paul continues in Verse 10

**(Verse 10)**

**And again it is said, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people."**

This is a quote from **Psalm 67.5**

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It is an express **summons** for gentiles to worship together **with** gods chosen people.

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Then Verse 11

**(Verse 11)**

**And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him."**

This is from **Psalm 117, Verse 1**, and it emphasizes that **nobody** on the earth is to be excluded from praise and worship of the Lord.

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Finally in Verse 12, Paul actually tells us **which** book of the Old Testament he is citing.

**(Verse 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."**

In this important prediction of the coming of the **Messiah of Israel**, it is noted that he will rise to **rule the gentiles** and they will put their **hope in him**.

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Thus we have seen a **series** of four Old Testament citations, one from the **Law**, one from the **Prophets**, and two from the **Psalms**.

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And the unified testimony of the **Old Testament** scripture is that the **Messiah of Israel** shall be the Lord and Savior of the **gentiles** as well

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In this lies the basis for **harmony** within the church in Rome to which Paul is writing.

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And it occurs to me that if **Jewish** and **gentile** Christians were able to find sufficient harmony in the word of God, to establish a church which has survived for 2000 years,

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then there should be few excuses now for disharmony among believers.

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Paul ends with a prayer.

**(Verse 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.**

This prayer is fitting acknowledgement that Paul, having said much to encourage harmony, knows that God himself and God alone is the one who finally can preserve harmony in his church.

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Whatever else we do, we must turn to him in prayer.

**Closing Prayer**