



ENCOURAGE, EDIFY

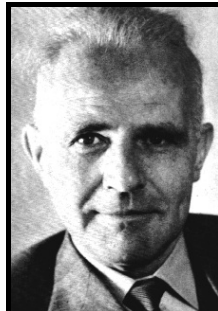
... that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God. Romans 15:6,7

Study 20a: BUILDING UP or TEARING DOWN? (14:18-23)

14:18-20 How may Christians (with best intentions) be guilty of tearing down Christ's church? (Eph. 2:9-22)

On the other hand, Paul teaches that this liberty will limit itself by love. There has not been a time since he wrote when there is abundant teaching in zeal without knowledge that contradicts and nullifies the principle laid down by Christ. **J.M. Stifler**, *Romans*, p. 248

Paul's thought seems to be that God Himself, His apostles and other ministers, and also all the members of the Church, are engaged both in the building up, in faith and obedience, of each several member. It is true that the building up of the Church and the building up of the individual members are two aspects of the same process, but the process will hardly be understood in its true wholeness, if either aspect has attention concentrated on



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'One cannot be a Christian by himself'

it in such a way that the other is lost sight of. **C.E.B. Cranfield** *Romans* Vol.2 p.722

14:21-23 When is "spirituality" a sin? (Gal. 2:11-14)

He knows very well that, in issues between the strong and the weak, the latter is by no means always the wronged party. On the contrary it often happens that in his weakness he has an effective weapon for making the circumstances comply with his view. Not infrequently it is the weak who is the real tyrant. **A. Nygren**, *op.cit.*, p. 445

[It is certainly not to be taken as a general statement that Christians who have no doubt about the rightness of what they do are blessed; for that would be merely an assertion of the blessedness of those Christians who have insensitive consciences. **C.E.B. Cranfield** *op.cit.*, p.727

Study 20b: LOVE -- The CEMENT of CHRIST'S EDIFICE (15:1-7)

15:1-2 What misguided course do some Christians adopt, all the time attempting to "please the Lord" and "edify the church"? (Gal. 2:12; 1 Cor. 10:23,24) What, then, SHOULD we do with immature, even errant Christians? (Heb. 10:23-25, Rev. 2:18 - 3:6, esp. vv. 2:25, 3:2)

You have believed; you are therefore in Christ, in Christ you are therefore free, by faith, from the preparatory restrictions of the past. Yes; but all this is not given you for personal display, but for divine communion. ... you are emancipated not that you may disturb the neighbours with shouts of freedom and acts of licence, but that you may be at leisure to serve them in love. -- **H.C.G. Moule**, *Expositor's Bible: Romans*, p. 391

The neighbour is very likely to be ready to be pleased by flattery and by the condonement of his wrong-doing; but the pleasing of the neigh-

-bour which is here commanded is such a pleasing as has regard to his true good, to his salvation, a pleasing which is directed toward his edification, a pleasing of one's neighbour which is no mere man-pleasing but has regard to God. **C.E.B. Cranfield** *op.cit.*, p.732

15:3-7 What examples does Paul hold before us, in case we should be tempted NOT to persevere, NOT to accept those confessing Christ?

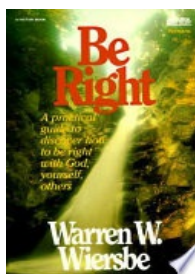
This harmony and fellowship among Christians is necessary, in order that they may glorify God aright. To honour God effectually and properly, there must be NO UNNECESSARY DISSENSIONS among his people ... This CANNOT BE DONE UNLESS THEY ARE UNITED in the bonds of Christian fellowship. **Charles Hodge** *Romans* p.434 (emphasis added)

Study 20c: PRESERVING the UNITY of CHRIST'S BODY (15:8-13)

15:8-12 When Christians create barriers between themselves and fellow Christians, what great work of Christ do they undermine? (Eph. 2:14-17; John 10:11,16)

Christ's coming was to the Jew in the way of God's truth, to the Gentiles in the way of his mercy. The former can praise for fidelity, the latter for grace. -- **J.M. Stifler**, *op.cit.*, p. 253

There is a beautiful progression in the promises that Paul quoted in verses 9 through 12.



* The Jews glorify God *among* the Gentiles (v.9, quoting Ps. 18:49)

* The Gentiles rejoice *with* the Jews (v.10, quoting Deut. 32:43)

* All the Jews and Gentiles *together* praise God (v.11, quoting Ps. 117:1)

* Christ shall reign over Jews and Gentiles (v.12, quoting Isa. 11:10)

-- **W.W. Wiersbe**, *op.cit.*, p. 166

It is not, however, only faith that produces fellowship. The reverse is also true. Faith grows out of fellowship. We need others to be able to believe. One cannot be a Christian by himself. All sorts of things can be done alone; but one cannot be a Christian alone. My own weak faith must constantly be awakened, renewed, strengthened, purified by the faith of others. We must come together really to believe. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them." We must learn that again. Everything today has become a matter of private property and private affairs, even faith. But faith must perish when it is alone. It can thrive only in fellowship. **Emil Brunner** *Our Faith* p.121

15:13 *What else, besides believers' joy and peace, does*

the disunity of the church jeopardize? (vv. 6,9,11; 2:23,24; Eph. 4:1-6 -- reflect on the relation between **one** body and **one** Lord, etc.)

He is addressing the saints of that great City which was afterwards, in the tract of time, to develop into even terrific exaggerations the idea of Church Order. But he has practically nothing to say to them unification and cohesion beyond this appeal to hold fast together by drawing nearer each and all to the Lord, and so filling each one his soul and life with Him. -- **H.C.G. Moule**, *op.cit.*, p. 407

NOTE: What is Paul's rule for interpreting Old Testament prophecy? (vv. 9-12)

Has Christ's relationship with Israel been severed?

[on 15:8] ... the natural inference to be drawn from this reference [*the circumcision*] (and from the subsequent reference to the Gentiles in the next verse) would seem to be that the division between the weak and the strong with which Paul has been concerned in this section was also, to a large extent at any rate, a division between Jewish and Gentile Christians. Christ has become (the force of the perfect infinitive [*gegenesthai*] is that HE NOT ONLY BECAME BUT ALSO REMAINS) the servant of the Jewish people ... He both was in His earthly life and His atoning death, and ALSO STILL IS, AS THE EXALTED LORD, THE MESSIAH OF ISRAEL ... It was in order that God's faithfulness to His covenant might be honoured; it was in order that He (Christ) might fulfil the promises made by God to the patriarchs. It is to be noted that in this first part of his solemn doctrinal declaration Paul has underlined yet once more the special priority and privileges of the Jews (cf. 1.16; 3.1-4; 9.4-5; also 11.13-24), and that there is special significance in his doing this in the present context, since most, if not all, of the weak will have been Jews, and a good many of the strong will have been Gentiles. It might perhaps be a further encouragement to the strong to show considerateness. **C.E.B. Cranfield** *International Critical Commentary: Romans* Vol.2 pp.740-42 (emphasis added)

