

Romans, Part 36

One of the amazing parts of being a believer is our connection with Christ and with one another. We have seen how this connection with Christ has produced a new kind of life in us and a vital relationship with God. This new life has caused us to know the depth of God's love and fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. This new way of walking in love has made us as believers more conscious and aware of the needs of others and the heart, mind and will of the Father.

Romans 14:19 NKJV Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.

The word for "edify" is translated "build up" in other translations. The word means to improve, instruct, or increase the potential of someone else's growth, happiness or holiness. Due to our connection with Christ, we want to be involved in things that strengthen and build up others.

Romans 15:1-2 NLT We who are strong must be considerate of those who are sensitive about things like this. We must not just please ourselves. We should help others do what is right and build them up in the Lord.

Romans 15:3-4 NLT For even Christ didn't live to please Himself. As the Scriptures say, "The insults of those who insult you, O God, have fallen on Me." Such things were written in the Scriptures long ago to teach us. And the Scriptures give us hope and encouragement as we wait patiently for God's promises to be fulfilled.

Romans 15:5-6 NLT May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus. Then all of you can join together with one voice, giving praise and glory to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit is maximizing the need for believers to live in peace and unity with one another.

To this end we are to live in such a way that we bring edification to one another. This concept is solidified in Romans 14:19.

Romans 14:19 NKJV Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.

The reality of God's kingdom and our personal participation in it necessitates each of us making every effort to do what leads to peace and mutual edification.

"Pursuing things that make for peace" is a frequent message of the New Testament. The unity and fellowship of the body of Christ (the church) is essential for personal and corporate spiritual health. To accommodate this, those who are strong in the Lord must pursue encouraging and building up those who are weak. The word "pursue" means to do something with intense

effort and with a definite purpose or goal. To achieve this unity and peace, both the weak and strong believer must stop focusing on themselves and make every effort to build up one another. Have you ever seen a group of people making a human pyramid? The individual on the top cannot reach their goal without the support of others. The strong must help those who are weak.

“Dwelling in peace” is a direct result of Spirit-led living.

Pursing peace is an essential characteristic of life in the Spirit. As our personal lives are controlled by the Holy Spirit, we will demonstrate characteristics that promote peace and edification for one another.

Galatians 6:2 NKJV Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. Bearing one another’s burdens is more than developing a tolerance of one another.

This quality of living requires a great amount of energy and effort and the success of it depends on the Holy Spirit’s power and life working within us. To develop this loving and sympathetic approach to one another, we must have the equipping or enabling of the Spirit. This is not just a corporate manifestation of the Holy Spirit’s power, it is the result of every individual member of the body of Christ being vitally connected and equipped by the Holy Spirit. To facilitate this, God equips individual believers personally and the church corporately.

Ephesians 4:12-13 ESV To equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

Notice the goal is the *“measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”* in every saint. God wants to establish and build up each of us to this measure of Christ.

Ephesians 4:14 ESV so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

Ephesians 4:15-16 ESV Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

This is the same message the Holy Spirit inspired the Apostle Paul to give to the Roman believers. God wants to build us up and make us strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

Ephesians 5:29-30 NKJV For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His

body, of His flesh and of His bones.

This is a key to the edification of the whole body of believers. We all must recognize, nourish, and cherish each and every part of the body of believers.

The idea of the unity and strength of the body of believers is addressed again in Corinthians.

Watch how we are connected to one another in Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:14-15 NIV Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body.

1 Corinthians 12:16-17 NIV And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be?

1 Corinthians 12:18-20 NIV But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

To pursue the things that make for peace and edify others, we must learn how to avoid things that destroy unity.

We must develop sympathetic awareness of one another and we must avoid the evil tendencies of our own heart and allow the Holy Spirit to mold us into the image of Christ.

Philippians 2:5 shows us how to achieve this.

Philippians 2:5 ESV Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,

Philippians 2:5 NKJV Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,

The body of believers must have a single mind.

The language in this verse is indicative of the individual and the whole body of believers. With the mind of Christ in all of us, we must pursue things that make for peace and edification. We all must have and develop an active pursuit of the things that make for peace and promote edification. When Paul spoke about this to the Corinthians, he talked about the unity of the body.

1 Corinthians 12:24-25 NKJV But GOD COMPOSED THE BODY, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.

Pay attention to that phrase: "God composed the body."

This is not just referring to your physical body, but the members of the body of Christ, the church. We should have the same care for one another. Most people appreciate when someone does something good or kind for them. We

should have the same care for one another.

Romans 15:5 AMP Now may the God Who gives the power of patient endurance and Who supplies encouragement, grant you to live in such mutual harmony and such full sympathy with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus,

Romans 15:6 AMP That together you may [unanimously] with united hearts and one voice, praise and glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Again, take note that God gives the power, but we have to live in mutual harmony and full sympathy with one another, in accord or harmony with Christ Jesus.

This prayer for mutual harmony and full sympathy with one another not only brings peace, it also strengthens our testimony and improves our fellowship with the Father.

Romans 15:1 AMP WE WHO are strong [in our convictions and of robust faith] ought to bear with the failings and the frailties and the tender scruples of the weak; [we ought to help carry the doubts and qualms of others] and not to please ourselves.

Romans 15:2 AMP Let each one of us make it a practice to please (make happy) his neighbor for his good and for his true welfare, to edify him [to strengthen him and build him up spiritually].

Romans 15:3 AMP For Christ did not please Himself [gave no thought to His own interests]; but, as it is written, The reproaches and abuses of those who reproached and abused you fell on Me.

How can we achieve this requirement?

- First, recognize the needs of others.
- Second, face personal weaknesses.
- Third, learn to live in love with one another.

If we are going to pursue the things which make for peace and edify others, we must learn to not please ourselves.

Have you been joined to Christ? If you have been joined to Christ, you should have a real relationship with Christ in your life. When we are joined individually to Christ, we are also at the same time joined to one another. It is impossible to be connected to Christ and to be isolated from and indifferent toward one another. Everything we do must be considered in relation to promoting our personal growth in Christ. Everything you do must be done to glorify God.

What is the motive or rationale behind edifying and strengthening others?

The Holy Spirit is not just interested in who gets their way. He is bringing us to a relationship of peace and productivity where Jesus is glorified. He is

bringing us into the measure of the fullness of Christ. God wants to fill you with righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, (Romans 14:17). Righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit involves relationships that are healthy and wholesome.

When our desire or passion is to please and glorify God, it involves building up one another.

Galatians 6:2 NKJV Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Philippians 2:4 NKJV Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

1 Corinthians 10:24 NKJV Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being.

This quality of unselfish living is not natural.

It is natural for us to have our own best interest in mind. What am I going to get out of this?

The law of Christ is a law of love.

Jesus clearly told us to love others with the same intensity that we love ourselves. The greatest commandment is a law of love. God wants our love to be expressed to Him and freely given to one another. When our love is balanced, it will find expression toward those who are weak and those who are strong. The only relief for weak souls is the love of Christ. God is going to allow you the privilege of showing His love to those in darkness.

A candle in the daylight does not give much light.

A candle in a cave will light up all of the crevices of darkness. You have been given the privilege of showing the character of Christ in a dark world. Christ's nature enables us to bear with those who are weak. The dark nature of the world cannot dispel the light that we have received. Jesus Christ was our perfect example in this quality of living.

Romans 15:3 NKJV For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me."

We all rejoice in what Christ Jesus did for us by bearing our sin, shame and reproach on His cross. He became our burden bearer. In the same manner, we are told to bear others' burdens. Jesus is the model for everyone who wants to please God.