



Romans (Strengthened by the Gospel) (Week 18/18) Gospel Partnership & Unity

Small Group Discussion Questions

Connect *Where might Jesus be calling you to change the way you respond to authority, disagreement, or other people for the sake of love?*

Warm-Up

1. What has stood out for you as we've looked through the letter to the Romans?

Read Romans 15:1-13

2. How are the "strong" meant to relate to the "weak"? What are *each of us* to do?
3. What is the goal of pleasing our neighbours? What shouldn't it look like?
4. How does Christ's example ground and shape what pleasing others should look like?
5. When have you seen other people defer their desires, for your good? What opportunities do you have at the moment, to defer your own preference and build others up?
6. Why should we accept others? When are you tempted to forget how Christ has welcomed you?
7. How does unity amongst God's people glorify God?

Read Romans 15:14-16:16

8. Looking at verse 14 (and earlier in the letter), how does Paul relate to the Christians in Rome?
9. Who does he greet in Rome? How does Paul describe them?
10. What stands out for you amongst the list of greetings?
11. Who are people in your life who you have served alongside and who have encouraged you in faith? If you were going to write your own list of greetings, who would you include?
12. Referring back to 15:14-33, how does Paul long for the Christians in Rome to partner with him? What does he urge them to pray for?
13. Who are Christians who you have never met, who you partner in the gospel through prayer?

Read Romans 16:17-27

14. What is Paul's final warning? Why do you think (or how have you known) this to be important?
15. What defines those Paul urges to keep away from? How is this different to disputable matters?
16. How does the assurance that God is able to establish in the gospel, give you encouragement as you continue living for him?

Apply *How have you been strengthened by the gospel, through the letter to the Romans?*

Pray *Heavenly Father, by your Spirit establish us in the gospel of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Help us to be united together, that we may bring you glory, In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

GOING DEEPER

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Small Group Discussion Questions

On Your Frontline this Week

What is some unseen work you do that is important in God's eyes?

For Families

- *Download:* some of the family resources to use at home: stbartskids.org

Listen, Watch, and Read

- *Listen (sermon):* "Missionary Priorities" by Vaughan Roberts:
<https://stebbes.org/sermons/missionary-priorities>
- *Listen (sermon):* "Co-workers in the Gospel" by Vaughan Roberts:
<https://stebbes.org/sermons/co-workers-in-the-gospel>
- *Listen (sermon):* "A Passion for Christ" by Matthew Skirton:
https://www.allsouls.org/Media/AllMedia.aspx?show_media=312792&show_file=345469
- *Listen (sermon):* "Mission: Sanctified by the Spirit" by Stephen Nichols:
https://www.allsouls.org/Media/AllMedia.aspx?show_media=169340&show_file=181273
- *Watch (video):* "Michael Bird and Nijay Gupta on Romans 16" by Michael Bird:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IigtUVR-9fY>

Series Resources

- *Read:* "Strengthened by the Gospel" by Brian Rosner. 📖
- *Read:* "The Story of God Bible Commentary: Romans" by Michael Bird.
- *Read:* "Into the Heart of Romans" by N. T. Wright. 📖
- *Read:* "Epistle of Paul to the Romans" by F. F. Bruce. 📖
- *Read:* "The Message of Romans" by John Stott. 📖
- *Read:* "The Epistle to the Romans" by Leon Morris. 📖
- *Watch:* "Romans" by the Bible Project:
<https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-romans/>

📖 Available to borrow from the St Bart's Library (Toowoomba): stbarts.com.au/library

ROMANS (STRENGTHENED BY THE GOSPEL)

Week 18/18 “Gospel Partnership & Unity”

by Amy Norman (13/09/2026, Toowoomba)

복음 안에서 동역과 연합 | 福音伙伴关系与合一 | சுவிசேஷ பங்களிப்பும், ஒற்றுமையும்

Bible Passage: Romans 15:1-16:27

*Heavenly Father, by your Spirit establish us in the
gospel of Jesus Christ..*

*Help us to be united as your people, that we may bring you glory,
In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

- After 18 weeks, we finally come to the end of the letter to the Romans.
You might be relieved or disappointed that it's nearly over.
Hopefully, as Paul has intended, you have been strengthened by the gospel.
Paul has certainly covered a lot of territory:
from sin and judgement, grace and faith, righteousness and the law, the Spirit and living
now in the world, amongst our neighbours, and in the church.
- There is so much packed in Romans,
that it can be easy to forget that this was a letter *first* sent to people –
who are loved by God and are loved by Paul.
- It wasn't just a tome written to sit on a shelf,
but it was written to shape, encourage, and strengthen communities.
- And particularly as we come to these final two chapters, chapters 15 and 16,
we see many of these relationships.
We have names of people, insight into how Paul has known them,
and we see his warmth and love for fellow brothers and sisters in Christ he hasn't yet met.
- Paul began his letter so that the Christians in Rome
would be *strengthened* by the gospel.
And after all that he has written, here in these final two chapters we see what the fruit of
being strengthened by the gospel looks like:
to **glorify God with one voice; partner with others, and avoid division.**

GLORIFY GOD WITH ONE VOICE | 15:1-13

한 목소리로 하나님께 영광돌리기 | 同心合意榮耀神 | ஒரே குரலாக கர்த்தரை மகிமைப்படுத்து

First, we see what it looks like to **glorify God with one voice**.

Let's go back to the beginning of chapter 15, from verse 1 ...

We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up. For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me." For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.

Romans 15:1-7.

- Paul continues addressing the "strong" and the "weak", as we saw last week, these are Christians who have different convictions of what it looks like to honour God.
- He tells them: the strong should bear with the weak, and not please ourselves.
- Paul immediately identifies himself with the "strong".
The mature in faith *should express* their maturity, through bearing with the weak.
Their strength should be evident in how they are able to bear with others in love,

3

and their ability to not please themselves.

- In fact, Paul implores both parties, both the strong and the weak, to focus on deferring what they want for the good of others. *Verse 2:*

Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up. verse 2

- Pleasing our neighbours is not to make us look nice and agreeable, for the direction is clear: pleasing our neighbours is *for their good, to build them up*.
- Like any good parent who works towards the *good* of their children, as Christians we are to work towards pleasing our neighbours *for their good*.
The reference to neighbours means this is not just contained to those we like or agree with, but we work for the good of *all* our brothers and sisters in Christ.
- It is pretty radical how the gospel should transform how we see one another. We are not just to tolerate or simply avoid arguments with each other, but we are to please others for their good.
- And the reason we can do something that is so counter-intuitive and hard, is that Jesus is our example. *Verse 3:*

4

- If Jesus had put his own desires first, then we would not have any hope.
- Pleasing others is not a compromise or being a pushover.
It's a disposition, a posture, that points away from yourself.
It doesn't mean desperately chasing after others approval,
and doing everything and anything they demand just to win their admiration.
It is living a life shaped by the cross.
- We see what pleasing others looks like in Christ.
- Jesus endured scorn, rejection, mocking,
and ultimately laying down his life on the cross,
for the good of his neighbours, for the good of you and me.
- When we look at another Christian,
we are looking at someone Jesus died for.
- And so we should work for their good, please them so they built up in faith,
and accept them - just as Christ has accepted us.
- This kind of love, a Christ-shaped love,
that prioritises others, works for their good, and builds one another up,
is a unity that brings praise to God! /

- If you've been part of a group or a church that does this well,
you know what a blessing it can be.
- But it is also really hard (and deeply counter-cultural), to put aside what *I want*,
and place the needs of others first.
- Thankfully, we don't do this alone. And we couldn't do it alone.
We have the Scriptures that point us to hope,
and God himself gives us endurance and encouragement,
that we might consider others first and be a united people in Christ.
- And it is this unity,
between all God's people, the Jews and Gentiles, the strong and weak,
which glorifies God.
- Unity is not wishful thinking,
but we are strengthened by God himself to be of one mind and voice.
- When we trust in the one who is the ultimate example of living for others,
God fills us with joy and peace, by the very power of the Holy Spirit.

PARTNER WITH OTHERS | 15:14-16:16

다른 이들과 동역하기 | 与他人建立伙伴关系 | எல்லாருடனும் இணைந்து செய்

Second, as we are united in the gospel, it follows that we **partner with others**.

- It might be easy to just assume that Paul was a solo operator, but the end of Romans shows us that this is certainly not the case.
- Just look at all the people Paul greets in Chapter 16!
- He says greet Priscilla & Aquila, and the church that meets in their house. He goes on, telling them to greet Epenetus, Mary, Andronicus & Junia, Ampliatus, Urbanus, Stachys, Apelles, the household of Aristobulus, Herodion, household of Narcissus, Tryphena, Tryphosa, Persis, Rufus and his mother, Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, *and the other brothers and sisters with them*, Philologus, Julia, Nereus, his sister, Olympas, *and all the Lord's people with them*.
- These are people he has visited, he has served with, even been imprisoned with!
- He describes them as his dear friends and his co-workers in the gospel.

7

- There is such a breadth of people, from fellow Jews to Gentiles, from their names we can tell some had been or are still slaves. There are households, couples, families, and individuals known to Paul. He names many men and he names many women.
- It is likely Phoebe who he commends at the beginning as a deacon, a servant of the church, delivered his letter to Rome, as Paul's representative.
- Practically, this list would have functioned as his referees. People that could be called on in Rome, who could confirm the gospel he has expounded in this letter.
- But I think what we can also grasp here, is how the gospel did not isolate Paul. His profound insights into the depths of the gospel did not draw him away from others.
- But rather, we see how serving Jesus united him with so many others, working together for the Lord!
- Hopefully, if you looked back on your life following Jesus, there are many different people who come to mind, who are dear friends, who you have served alongside, whole households and communities that have encouraged you in faith.

8

- The gospel unites us to partner with others.
This includes those we already know,
but as Paul demonstrates, it also extends to Christians we haven't yet met.

Look back at chapter 15, verse 20:

It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation. Rather, as it is written:

"Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand."

This is why I have often been hindered from coming to you. 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, 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. 15:20-24

- Paul's specific ambition is to preach the gospel where no one has heard of Christ yet.
His sights are on Spain.
Geographically, Spain is further west than Rome.
But even more significantly, it is very different culturally than the rest of the Mediterranean, where in Spain they speak Latin (not Greek like everyone else).
- For this mission, Paul needs partners and hopes
that Christians in Rome might partner with him. >

9

He asks for assistance, likely needing financial support
and introductions to people in Spain in order to get started.

- And right in the middle of his plans to go to Spain,
Paul talks about his other current partnership to support believers in Jerusalem.
- In the midst of this current and future plans,
he longs for the Christians in Rome to support him in prayer.
Praying for protection,
and praying for reception of the contribution to Jerusalem.
- These details of Paul's trips to Jerusalem and Spain might seem like an unnecessary travel agenda stuck onto the end of this letter,
but it is one example of *how* the gospel *should be* expressed in partnering with others.
- Partnership can be costly. Chapter 16 shows it might demand financial support,
hard work, or even risking your own life.
- Partnership can even be with those we don't personally know.
Paul hadn't yet met the Christians in Rome, but he is already praying for them,
and longs for them to partner with him in prayer.
- There should be many we pray for, who we haven't yet met.
We should also look for people to partner with.
Maybe other Christians in your workplace, at your school, in your retirement village,

you could gather together to pray,
and find a practical way to work for the good of people there.

- And of course there are many ways to strive together in the gospel here at St Bart's, joining a team, to build up God's people.

11

AVOID DIVISIONS | 16:17-19

분열을 피하기 | 避免分裂 | பிரிந்து செல்வதை தவிர்

As Paul ends his letter, it is interesting that he includes a quick warning to **avoid divisions**.
Chapter 16, from verse 17 ...

I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people. Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I rejoice because of you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil. 16:17-19

- Maybe you know first hand how deadly divisions in a church can be.
How it can undermine, distort, and destroy relationships,
even those which have been built over many years.
- These divisions are not simply disagreements about disputable matters,
but it is evil creeping in. /
- Paul's warning is to *watch out*.
Watch out for people who cause divisions.
Keep away from false teachers who put obstacles in your way,
teaching a different gospel.

12

- He gives us the main test for how to identify them:
these are people who don't serve the Lord, but their own appetites.
- It doesn't mean we avoid people we have minor disagreements with,
or cast off anyone who has a different position on secondary issues.
Paul is talking about people who *are fundamentally not serving Christ*.
- These are false teachers, whose fruit is division,
and whose teaching contradicts the gospel.
- Paul has made a big deal about the unity to be found amongst brothers and sisters
in Christ, as we love one another, please one another, and accept one another.
- But this is not blind, naive acceptance.
As he encourages in *verse 19* ...

I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil. *Romans 16:19*

- Paul is realistic. Even in a community united in Christ,
there will continue to be outside threats.
- Jesus also warned us to watch out for false prophets.
- Even though we should lament division we've witnessed, been hurt by, or been apart of,

13

we are assured that God will be victorious,
the God of peace will in an ultimate and final way, crush Satan,
who is the source of division. /

- To be a healthy, gospel-shaped community, requires us to take
defensive actions - watching out for evil, avoiding division.
- And it requires *proactive actions* -
bearing, accepting, welcoming, pleasing, and building one another up.

For over 10 years now, I've been part of this community.
10 years is a long enough time to see how people *really* treat one another.
It has been a profound joy to witness of how the gospel has taken a grip on people's lives,
to see how people here have loved one another,
worked hard at avoiding division and offering grace,
have welcomed those who are different,
and put aside their own agendas to build one another up.

The beauty of this unity and generosity towards one another, is that hasn't ended here,
but has spilled out and built up our brothers and sisters in Christ all over Australia.
Unity in Christ is the foundation for gospel partnership, and I've seen first hand how unity has enabled us to
share resources generously, try new things that might benefit those we've never met,
and even plant a church to build up brothers and sisters in Christ in a different place. >

14

CONCLUSION

- We are certainly not perfect and don't get everything right.
It's not always easy to be a gospel community.
We are not reliable sources of peace and love.
We don't have the strength to hold it all together, year after year.
- But we are reminded that God does.
The Lord is the one who establishes us.
- The gospel which unites us together is God's.
It is his promises, to his prophets, made through his Word, about his Son,
through the power of his Spirit.
- Right at the beginning of Romans,
Paul reminds us that we are called to belong to Jesus Christ.
- And as he ends, he reminds us that it is God who keeps us: *verse 25 ...*

15

Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ, in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all the Gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from faith—to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen. *Romans 16:25-27*

- The letter to the Romans sets out how the gospel transforms and shapes us. >
Once we were enemies, but now in Christ we are saved, we are reconciled,
we have the Spirit of God, we are citizens of God's kingdom,
children of God, and co-heirs with Christ.
- As we seek to live as God's people,
participating in God's mission,
we are Gospel people.
- And the wonderful assurance here,
is that if God is able to establish us in his gospel,
then he will keep carrying it through to the end.

16