

## **Romans 15 Maturity for Jews and Gentiles (33 verses)**

### **1) Christ demands our concern for less mature believers.**

v. 1 **We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak** and not to please ourselves. 2 Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up.

v. 1 Now, **those who are mature** in their faith can easily be recognized, for they don't live to please themselves but **have learned to patiently embrace others in their immaturity**. 2 **Our goal must be to empower others** to do what is right and good for them, and to bring them into spiritual maturity. TPT

### **2) The ancient scriptures were recorded for our instruction.**

v. 3 For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me." 4 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**.

### **3) Our unity is found in Jesus and we must be in one accord with Him.**

v. 5 May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you **the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had**, 6 so that with **one mind and one voice** you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 7 **Accept one another**, then, **just as Christ accepted you**, in order to bring praise to God.

### **4) Jesus is the one hope for all people, Jews and Gentiles alike.**

v. 8 For I tell you that **Christ has become a servant of the Jews** on behalf of God's truth, so that the promises made to the patriarchs might be confirmed 9 and, **moreover, that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy**. As it is written: "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing the praises of your name." 10 Again, it says, "Rejoice, you Gentiles, with his people." 11 And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles; let all the peoples extol him." 12 And again, Isaiah says, "The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; in him the Gentiles will hope."

v. 12 And Isaiah prophesied: "An heir to David's throne will emerge, and **he will rise up as ruler over all the non-Jewish nations, for all their hopes will be met in him**." TPT

### **5) One of Paul's many apostolic blessings.**

v. 13 **May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit**.

**Note: a blessing is part prayer, part prophecy and part impartation.**

**6) Paul's primary ministry was to Gentiles all over the Roman Empire.**

v. 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**.

**7) He really enjoyed spreading faith in Jesus and the New Covenant.**

v. 17 **Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God**. 18 I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done— 19 by the power of signs and wonders, through **the power of the Spirit of God**. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ. 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**. 21 Rather, as it is written: "Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand."

**8) Paul's plan was to eventually visit Rome.**

v. 22 **This is why** I have often been hindered from coming to you. 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 So on my way to Spain **I hope to visit you as I pass through Rome. And after I have enjoyed fellowship with you for a while**, I hope that you would **help me financially** on my journey.

**9) His next stop was Jerusalem where he was bringing an offering for the poor.**

v. 25 But now **I'm on my way to Jerusalem** to encourage God's people and minister to them. 26 I am pleased to inform you that **the believers of Macedonia and Greece have made a generous contribution for the poor among the holy believers in Jerusalem**. 27 They were thrilled to have an opportunity to give back to the believers in Jerusalem. For indeed, they are deeply grateful for them and feel indebted because they brought them the gospel. **Since the ethnic multitudes have shared in the spiritual wealth of the Jewish people, it is only right that the non-Jewish people share their material wealth with them**. 28 So, **when I have completed this act of worship and safely delivered the offering to them in Jerusalem**, I will set out for **Spain** and visit you on my way there. 29 I know that when I come to you, I will come in the full measure of the blessing of Christ.

**10) Paul requested Prayer. If he needed the prayer of others, how about us?**

v. 30 I urge you, brothers and sisters, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by **praying to God for me**. 31 **Pray** that I may be kept safe from the unbelievers in Judea and **that the contribution I take to Jerusalem may**

be favorably received by the Lord's people there, 32 so that I may come to you with joy, by God's will, and in your company be refreshed.

**11) He then gives a second, short apostolic blessing.**

v. 33 The God of peace be with you all. Amen.

**Romans 16 Paul names a large number of people and groups.**

**1) Phoebe is a female leader commended to the Church at Rome by Paul.**

v. 1 I commend to you **our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church** in Cenchreae. 2 I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of his people and to **give her any help she may need** from you, for **she has been the benefactor of many people, including me.**

1. Phoebe was listed first.
2. She was commended by Paul as his dear Sister.
3. She was called a **Deacon** of the church at **Cenchreae**, a seaport of **Corinth**.
4. Paul asked that she be well received in Rome.
5. The structure indicates that she carried his letter to the **Romans**.
6. He says that she may need assistance for some reason, which he asks them to provide.
7. Paul calls her a “**benefactor**” to many, including himself.
8. “**benefactor:**” a woman set over others, female guardian, protectress, patroness, caring for the affairs of others and aiding them with her resources. *Thayer's Greek Dictionary*

**“Jewish travelers normally carried letters of recommendation attesting that they should be received; they were generally bearers of such letters themselves. (The only mail service was by imperial couriers for the government; Paul thus had to send the letter by a traveler.) Paul no doubt emphasizes Phoebe's spiritual qualifications for two reasons: Jewish and Greco-Roman circles did not usually have high regard for women's religious wisdom; and she will need to minister to them, explaining to them by word of mouth anything in Paul's letter that the hearers would not understand.**

“**Servant**” (KJV, NASB) is the Greek *diakonos*, which is sometimes translated “**deacon**” (e.g., NRSV), **probably the owner of a home in which churches met.** The term for “**deacon**” probably corresponds to the *chazan* of the synagogue, who was in charge of the building (see comment on 1Ti 3:8 for the meaning of “**deacon**”). If deacons filled this office or the office of charity overseers, they held an office that was respected in Jewish synagogues (and not normally assigned to women). But **the New Testament usually applies the term *diakonos* to “ministers” of God's word, like Paul and his colleagues;** Paul may have this meaning in view here (although ancient Judaism did not allow women to teach the law publicly to men).” *IVP Bible Background Commentary (IVP)*

**2) Paul has high praise for his friends and colleagues, Priscilla and Aquila.**

v. 3 Greet **Priscilla and Aquila**, my co-workers in Christ Jesus. 4 **They risked their lives for me.** Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them. 5 **Greet also the church that meets at their house.**

**Act 18:2** There he met a **Jew named Aquila**, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with **his wife Priscilla**, because **Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome**. Paul went to see them, Paul went to see them, 3 and because he was a **tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them...**8 **Paul stayed on in Corinth** for some time. Then he left the brothers and sisters and **sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila**. Before he sailed, he had his hair cut off at **Cenchreae** because of a vow he had taken...19 They arrived **at Ephesus, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila**. He himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews...26 He (*Apollos*) began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When **Priscilla and Aquila heard him**, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.

**1Co 16:19** The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. **Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house.**

**2Ti 4:19** Greet **Priscilla and Aquila** and the household of Onesiphorus.

**“Husbands were normally mentioned first unless the wife was of higher status, which may suggest Priscilla’s superior status in society (by birth) or in the church.”**  
*IVP*

**3) Epenetus was remembered as the first convert in Asia.**

v. 5b Greet my dear friend **Epenetus**, who was **the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia**.

**“Epenetus** was a dear friend (literally, **“beloved”**) of Paul, but we know nothing about him apart from Paul’s claim that he was the first person in Asia Minor who became a Christian.” *IVP*

**4) Greet a lady named Mary/Miriam who helped Paul for the Roman church.**

v. 6 Greet **Mary**, who worked very hard for you.

**“Maria”** could be a Latinized form of the Jewish **“Miriam”** (normally translated **“Mary”** in the New Testament), or possibly a Latin *nomen*, probably indicating citizenship. *IVP*

**5) Junia the female Apostle was related to Paul and saved before him.**

v. 7 Greet **Andronicus and Junia**, my fellow Jews who have **been in prison with me**. They are **outstanding** (**“outstanding”** (NIV, NASB), **“esteemed”** (CEB), **“highly**

*respected*” (NLT), “*well known*” (GNT)) among the apostles (“*well-known apostles*” (TPT)) , and **they were in Christ before I was.**

1. **They were a man and a woman.**
2. **Brother and Sister or husband and wife.**
3. **They were Jewish and may have been related to Paul.**
4. **They had both been in prison with Paul.**
5. **They are both well known Apostles.**
6. **They were in Christ before Paul and may have known Jesus.**
7. **They are mentioned no where else in scripture.**

“**Andronicus**” is elsewhere attested as a Hellenistic Jewish name. “**Junia**” is a Latin *nomen* that should indicate her Roman citizenship. Against attempts to make “Junia” a contraction of the masculine “Junianus,” this form is not attested in Rome; **ancient Christian readers recognized that Junia was a woman.** Because she and Andronicus traveled together without scandal, and singleness was unusual, they were undoubtedly a husband-wife team; husband-wife teams were known in some professions, like doctors and lower-class merchants. **The most natural way to read the Greek phrase is that both were apostles;** some modern interpreters have rejected this reading mainly because they presuppose that women could never fill this office. “Kinsmen” (KJV, NASB) can mean countrymen. *IVP*

## 6) Greetings for assorted others.

v. 8 Greet **Ampliatius**, my dear friend in the Lord. 9 Greet **Urbanus**, our co-worker in Christ,

“**Ampliatius**” and “**Urbanus**” were common slave names in Rome. *IVP*

v. 9b and my dear friend **Stachys**. 10 Greet **Apelles**, whose fidelity to Christ has stood the test. Greet **those who belong to the household of Aristobulus.**

“**The household of Aristobulus**” could mean that he has died, or it “may refer to freed slaves of **Aristobulus, Herod the Great’s grandson**, who spent his life in Rome. But “Aristobulus” is a common Greek name, so the phrase could refer to a house church or family headed by a different Aristobulus. *IVP*

v. 11 Greet **Herodion**, my fellow Jew. Greet **those in the household of Narcissus** who are in the Lord.

“**Household of Narcissus**” could mean that he has died, or it “may mean the freed persons formerly belonging to **Narcissus, himself a freedman who was one of the empire’s most powerful people under Claudius.**” *IVP*

**7) Paul mentions quite a few other Godly women and leaders.**

v. 12 Greet **Tryphena** and **Tryphosa**, those women who work hard in the Lord.

“**Tryphaena**” and “**Tryphosa**” are Greek names sometimes used by Jewish as well as Greek women. One scholar, noting that both names come from a root meaning “delicate,” thinks that Paul may be playing on their names ironically when he says they “labor hard”; this proposal is weakened by the same phrase in Rom 16:6.” *IVP*

v. 12b Greet my dear friend **Persis**, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord.

““**Persis**” is attested as a slave name but was also used by free persons.” *IVP*

**8) An interesting man named Rufus and his mother are mentioned.**

v. 13 Greet **Rufus**, chosen in the Lord, and **his mother, who has been a mother to me**, too.

**Note: Simon of Cyrene is called "the father of Alexander and Rufus." This Rufus may be the same man mentioned in Mark.**

**Mark 15:21** A certain man from **Cyrene**, **Simon**, the father of Alexander and **Rufus**, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross.

“**Rufus**” is a Roman name, sometimes born by Jews (**some commentators think this is the Rufus of Mrk 15:21**); it was a common slave name. Greetings at the close of letters could include affectionate terms of intimacy such as “father” or “mother” (e.g., one ancient letter addresses two older men as “fathers”). Here “**mother**” could be a simple mark of endearment toward an older woman, or it may imply that she was a benefactor who helped support Paul’s ministry. *IVP*

**9) Paul extends more greetings to a larger group including more women of note.**

v. 14 Greet **Asyncritus**, **Phlegon**, **Hermes**, **Patrobas**, **Hermas** and the other **brothers** and **sisters** with them. 15 Greet **Philologus**, **Julia**, **Nereus** and **his sister**, and **Olympas** and **all the Lord's people who are with them**.

”Like Greeks, Jewish people in the ancient Mediterranean often used Greek names compounded from the names of pagan gods, like Hermes or Apollo. “**Patrobus**” is short for the rare name “**Patrobius**”; **some scholars have linked this name with the household of one of Nero’s wealthy freedmen**. “**Phlegon**” was also a common slave name.” *IVP*

“**Julia**” is a Latin *nomen* (not just a *praenomen*) and may indicate that she was a Roman citizen. (By contrast, other commentators have noted that it was instead a common name for female slaves.)” *IVP*

#### 10) How do we apply Paul’s reference to “a holy Kiss?”

v. 16 Greet one another with a **holy kiss**. All the churches of Christ send greetings.

#### Story: Sergeant Mike

#### 11) Warning against divisiveness.

v. 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.**” 18 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.**

“**Mark them which cause divisions** - Several MSS. read, **look sharply after them**; let them have no kiss of charity nor peace, because they strive to make divisions, and thus set the flock of Christ at variance among themselves; and from these divisions, offenses (scandals) are produced; and this is contrary to that doctrine of peace, unity, and brotherly love which you have learned. **Look sharply after such that they do you no evil, and avoid them - give them no countenance, and have no religious fellowship with them.**” *Adam Clarke*

“**In keeping with the point of the letter** (see the discussion of the situation in the introduction), **those who cause schisms and divisions are Paul’s main object of warning.**” *IVP*

#### 12) A precious promise with an ironic twist.

v. 19 **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.** 20 **The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.** The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

**Genesis 3:14** So the **LORD God said to the serpent**, “..15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; **he will crush your head**, and you will strike his heel.”

#### 13) Paul’s companions are mentioned and several are familiar.

v. 21 **Timothy**, my co-worker, sends his greetings to you, as do **Lucius, Jason** and **Sosipater**, my fellow Jews. 22 I, **Tertius**, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord. 23 **Gaius**, whose hospitality I and the whole church here enjoy, sends you his greetings. **Erastus**, who is the city's **director of public works**, and our brother **Quartus** send you their greetings.

“**Lucius**” was a Greco-Roman name sometimes used by Jews; its shortened Greek form is “**Lucas**” (i.e., **Luke**). For the names “**Jason**” and “**Sosipater**” (possibly but not necessarily the same people), see Act 17:6, Act 17:9 and Act 20:4 (“**Sopater**” was another form of “**Sosipater**”).” *IVP*

“**Tertius**” was a Roman name (often used for a third child), sometimes used by Jews. Most of the ancient world was too illiterate to write letters, certainly letters as sophisticated as this one; they depended instead on scribes. Those who were highly literate were also wealthy enough that they could dictate letters to scribes as well, sometimes their own secretaries, who were usually literate slaves. **Paul’s host may have lent him his scribe, or Tertius may have been a professional scribe**; in any case, **Tertius seems to be a believer**, because scribes did not normally add their own greetings. That Paul followed the common practice of signing dictated letters (1Co 16:21; Gal 6:11; Col 4:18; 2Th 3:17) indicates that he used scribes regularly. *IVP*

”**The church in Corinth** met in **Gaius’** home; Paul is probably also lodging there. For his house to accommodate “the whole church,” it must have been larger than most of the house churches.” *IVP*

“**City treasurers**” (NASB) were often public slaves or freedmen, but they were generally wealthy. In other cases public jobs like this one were assigned to well-to-do persons as part of their civic responsibilities. If this is the same “**Erastus**” who is attested in a Corinthian inscription as an *aedile* in this period (and this is likely), he must have been a wealthy benefactor of the city, part of the municipal aristocracy. *IVP*

#### **14) Apostolic Blessing/Benediction, obedience that comes from faith.**

v. 24 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**, 26 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**— 27 to the only wise God be glory forever through **Jesus Christ! Amen.**

“The conclusions of Greco-Roman letters varied considerably but often ended with a wish for the recipient’s health and then “Farewell.” Synagogues, however, closed prayers, readings and services with benedictions, and **Paul anticipates that his letter would be publicly read in house churches’ worship services.**” “Here Paul offers the sort of standard Jewish doxology used to close Hellenistic Jewish religious works (except, of course, for “**through Jesus Christ**”). “Amen” was the standard closing at the end of prayers and a number of Jewish books.” *IVP*