**Romans 15-16 – Handling Differences And Why We Need Others In Our Life**

**\*\* As we begin:**

* Today we are finishing up Romans and are looking at one final point on how to handle differences we may have with others over things not “expressly forbidden in Scripture.” (J. Vernon McGee)
* We also will look at **Rom. 16** where Paul mentions a number of fellow Christ followers. We will see some practical things to take with us from this chapter.

**Handling Differences And Needing Others**

**Take the high road no matter what someone does or says – Rom. 15:1-7**

* Some people think it is their job to correct us at every turn. This does not mean we never say anything. At times we must correct someone because they are wrong and need to be told the facts.
* In **vs. 1** the more mature believer is told that they have an “obligation”, a duty or necessity, to bear with the failings of the weaker, less mature Christian. We are not to live just for ourselves.
* We are to “bear” (to put on one’s self, endure) the “failings” (doubts, hesitations) of those who are still learning in the Christian life. There is no place for self-absorption.
* **Vs. 2** tells us not to push our personal convictions and freedoms on others but encourage each other.
* In **vs. 3** Paul points to Christ as our example of One Who did not please Himself but did for others what we could not do for ourselves.
* **Point:** Think of what Christ did for us. This should help us remember our place to not go out of our way to offend others by what we do. Christ was a servant.
* We are to accept and welcome each other. That is not always easy to do.

**We need each other – Romans 16:1-16**

* There are over 25 names listed in **Rom. 16:1-16**. In **vs. 1** we meet a lady named “Phoebe.”
* Her name means “radiant” or “bright.” She is called a “servant”, the female noun that is sometimes translated as “deacon,” but not always. This word is found in places such as **Phil.1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8**.
* Paul was commending Phoebe for her willingness to serve the Lord in whatever way she could or was led to do. We see that here in the text.
* Here are some applications from the life of Phoebe.
* **First**, God wants us serving, whatever the capacity might be. We all have spiritual gifts, talents, abilities, areas of interests, that we can pursue in serving God.
* On a sidenote: many believe that there is a place for deacons/deaconess in churches. At Oakridge we call these people “Ministry Team Leaders.”
* The word for “elders” is always in the masculine gender in the NT. There is a great responsibility that goes with that position. When it comes to having women who fit the role of “deaconess” I have no problem.
* A **second** application from Phoebe’s life is this. We are to give everyone an avenue to serve.
* In **vs. 2** note the word “patron.” It describes someone who is a female, a guardian, a protector, who cares for others and helps them with their resources. Phoebe may have helped further the kingdom of God by giving, for example.
* A **third** application is that we need to help those who are serving, to give them resources and the support they need.
* A **fourth** application is that we are all different and we need that variety when it comes to serving. Just look at the list in **Rom. 16**. There are no “cookie cutter” Christians.
* A **fifth** application comes from **vs. 10**. Our faith will be tested, and our response to those trials speaks to our integrity.
* **Point:** How do we manage difficulties? Complain, or grab ahold of our faith and trust the Lord that He knows what He is doing. Are we learning anything? Character is developed in trials **(Rom. 5:3-5)**.

**Be on guard for troublemakers – Romans 16:17-18**

* These are people who stir up trouble and cause problems.
* We are to “watch out” **(vs. 17)**, a word meaning “to observe, fix our eyes on, direct our attention) for those who are problem people. Be aware of them, what they say and how they act and treat others.
* They “cause divisions”, and literally are the authors of such things in churches. They are self-serving and self-consumed.
* These problem people “create obstacles”, causing people to be drawn into error.
* These troublemakers are in opposition to the doctrine believers had been taught. What they said did not line up with historic Christianity.
* **Vs. 17** tells us to “avoid” them. It is a command to do so. We cannot give an inch to false teaching.
* **Vs. 18** tells us how these people operate. They use “smooth talk” (they are eloquent speakers) and “flattery” (words artfully adapted to captivate the hearer, polished language). The “naïve” are those who trust everyone.
* Note: Avoid these people. Stay on guard. Listen to what people say and how they say it. And follow the Word of God.