

Romans 15:4-13

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Modified from Irving L. Jensen's excellent work " Jensen's Survey of the NT "				

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Our Responsibilities Under Grace - Part 17

by Dr. Wayne A. Barber

Life is made up of relationships. Every child born in this world just adds one more relationship. It seems like all of life is made up of relationships. Many of us at times in our Christian walk have said, "Lord if it wasn't for people, I could live the Christian life." But relationships are the key, the signal that I'm living righteously before God, walking in obedience to Him. The signal is in the relationships that I have around me.

The apostle Paul in Romans 14:22 is saying exactly that. He points first to our relationship to God and then to our relationships with one another. In verse 22 he points out the individuality of living out of our own conviction, the responsibility every individual believer has with God. He says in verse 22, "The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves." Oh, what a powerful, powerful statement. Verse 23 goes on to say, "But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin."

Now we must understand what Paul is talking about. He's saying each of us, whether stronger or weaker, is to live out of our own convictions, not off the convictions of somebody else. We're supposed to get in the Word of God for ourselves. Get in line with the Father through His Son, Jesus Christ, in the power of His spirit. Learn to let the Word of God form convictions in our life. If you're not walking by faith he said, you're walking in sin. Anything not of faith is sin. That's similar to what it says in Hebrews, "without faith it is impossible to please God." Now where does faith come from? "Faith comes from hearing and hearing from the Word of

God." So what Paul is saying is, "Listen, if you have convictions as the stronger brother and you have convictions as the weaker brother, make sure you got them in your walk with God and you got them from your study of His Word. Because His Word will form a grid for you through which you begin to approve or disapprove of certain things in your life."

He says the one who doubts is the one who is in conflict with himself. God's Word has told him one thing as best as he can understand. He may even be wrong, but it's told him whatever it's told him and if he goes ahead and does what perhaps the Word of God has told him not to do, he's in conflict with himself. He's not walking by faith. What he's doing is not based upon the conviction he got from God's Word. Therefore, he's one confused miserable individual. Individually we are to walk in light of our own convictions and if some understand more than others, that's probably the way it's going to be.

That's what Paul is addressing. Those strong in the faith and those weak in the faith are alright. As long as that sincere, weaker brother is seeking the Lord and coming to the Word, then we are not to demean or scorn him in any way. Leave him to walk in his convictions. The same way with the strong brother in Christ. If you're not doing that, you're walking in sin.

What does that mean? Hamartia means you're missing the mark. Your family's missing the mark. Your relationships are missing the mark. Whatever you're doing in the business world is missing the mark. What mark? The mark that God has for you. You see, if you're not living out of the Word of God, if it is just a book that you come on Sunday's to hear about and enjoy and you're not framing your convictions out of it, then you're completely missing the mark of what God has for you. You don't comprehend what the Christian life is all about. The Bible is imperative to our walking with God.

Well, we've come to 15:5. The context, again, has been the weaker brother and the stronger brother. In fact, if you'll go back to Romans 12, that's been the context of relationships all the way through. Romans 12:1-2 tells us how we relate to God. Romans 12:3 through chapter 15 is about how we relate to others. 14:1 to where we are deals with the stronger and weaker brother.

Paul is not talking about a sinful brother, he is talking about a weaker brother, one who doesn't understand the faith. He's not talking about a stubborn brother; but he's also not talking about the professional weaker brother. Do you know what a professional weaker brother is? He lives to be offended by somebody. I think there are some people who get up in the morning and say, "Lord, I'm going to let somebody offend me today." They live all day long trying to find something wrong in somebody else's life to say that they have been offended. That's not who he's talking about. If you're a professional weaker brother, just get saved or get right with God. That's not who he's talking about in this text. He's talking about a person who's really seeking God, who just does not understand the faith as 14:1 said.

Paul, in concluding all of that about the stronger and the weaker brother, first of all lifts up a prayer. That's where we're going to begin, in Romans 15:5. He lifts up a prayer because only God is going to effect what he's just taught the Roman believers. He says in verse 5, "Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus." The word "perseverance" and the word "encouragement" are the same words we found back in verse 4. Perseverance is the word *hupomone*, which means the ability to bear up under whatever it is that you're going through. The word encouragement is *paraklesis*, which is also the word for comfort.

Verse 4 says the scriptures bring that to us, but verse 5 says it is God who brings that to us. You get the picture. As we go to the Word seeking the Lord in our walk with Him, it's not the scriptures so much, but it's God through the scriptures that enables us to be encouraged and shows us that we can bear up under whatever situation we have to deal with. It is really God who gives that to us.

Well, as we have noted, there was spiritual pride in the church in Rome. Some stronger brothers, those who understood the faith, somehow became spiritually proud of what they understood. Paul had to address that. Spiritual pride is a very, very serious thing. Lurking around the corner from understanding spiritual truth is spiritual pride. Look out! The moment you understand a truth and become eloquent in speaking, writing or sharing it, look out or you may be in line to become very spiritually proud of what you know. Without realizing it, you're going to take it out on the weaker brother who hasn't come to that place yet in their life, the weaker brother who hasn't understood what you've understood. Then there's that conflict that you have to deal with in your walk.

Paul says for us to be of the same mind. "Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus." The word same mind is the word *phroneo*. That's an important word to understand. What does it mean when he's been talking about the stronger and weaker brother? Both of them are sincere. One of them understands. The other one does not understand, yet the stronger cannot be demeaning to the weaker. We're to accept. We're to pull each other up. But now he says to them, "be of the same mind."

What is he talking about? Well the word phroneo is used five times in Romans. Let's look and see how it's used other places, and I think it will tell us what the word means here. What does it mean to be of the same mind? I may be a stronger brother. I may be a weaker brother, but what does it mean? Go back to Romans 8:5, and I'll show you the first time it's used.

First of all in Romans 8:5 it refers to a mind that is focused. He says in Romans 8:5, "For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit." The word for minds is phroneo. Paul is summing all this up and saying, "Listen, stronger brother, focus on this. Weaker brother, focus on this. You may not agree on everything down here, but you focus on this. You be of a focused mind set here."

The second time it's used is in 12:3. It's a mind that thinks with integrity when it comes to our relationship with God. "For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith." In other words, there's got to be that willingness of restraint. Even though you know you're right, you're willing to back off of that. You think with integrity. Now, this is what it means. Of course in the context it's very clear for the stronger brother: that integrity of "don't use your freedom to become a stumbling block to a weaker brother". Both sides are to have a focused mindset, but have a mind that is with integrity when it comes to your relationship with God, your relationship to one another.

Look in 12:16, and we find it again. It is definitely used in attitudes that we have towards one another. This is the word that's used over in Philippians 2 when it says have this attitude in yourselves which is also in Christ Jesus. It's the same idea. It's always a word that we've got to understand.

You know, when you go skiing, the first thing they teach you is how to stop. You've got to know how to stop if you're ever going to learn how to start. Phroneo is that attitude of learning when to pull back, how to have a focus on the weaker, the stronger. It's a very important word. Verse 16 says, "Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation." So this is totally a mindset one has towards themselves in light of their relationship with God. It's a very focused word. It's a word that's an attitude towards others.

Then fourth, it's found in Romans 14:6. It's an attitude that when you have it, it affects a certain kind of behavior. Now, this is why Paul's so interested in this. He's telling the strong brother and the weaker brother, "I won't you to have this same kind of thinking, both of you. You may not agree on everything down here, but this same mindset must be in both of you. It's going to affect your behavior toward each other." Romans 14:6 says, "He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God." The word "observe" is the word phroneo. He's saying that phroneo is a mindset. It's a focused attitude that when you have it, it's going to affect your behavior towards somebody else.

Relationships are so important. When God's working in your heart and your life He's going to give you a mindset. Paul says, "Listen, you may be the stronger brother and understand grace. You may be the weaker brother. You don't understand it. But that's alright. You have the same attitude towards one another and towards God so that you can peacefully coexist together." It's very, very important that we understand what he's saying. Know when to back off; know when not to say; know when not to speak; know how to act and when not to do this or do that. Have phroneo. Have a mindset that teaches you this.

Well, contextually, the behavior that comes out of this attitude in chapters 14 and 15 is one that treats another with respect. Paul says in 15:5, "according to Christ Jesus." You see, Jesus is always the measuring stick. We know how Jesus is. We know how He lives. He lives in us. So we do it in accordance with the Lord Jesus Christ. That automatically takes away all of our excuses. There's always going to be the weaker brother. There's always going to be the stronger brother. There's going to be relationships in the body of Christ that are pleasant. But the same time if every man, in their walk with God, sincerely asks God to develop within him this attitude toward others that's right, even if we don't always agree down here, we can at least have the attitude of respect towards one another. All of this is in accordance with the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, He determines the measure. He determines how much of this is being able to be lived out in your life. When our flesh says we can't, we know that Christ in us can.

Now, what is the purpose for this oneness? Why is Paul praying this? Why does he pray for the stronger and the weaker brother to be of the same attitude? So that they may have the mutual respect first for God and then for one another, to not be spiritually proud and put down the other person.

Look at Romans 15:6. It says, "that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Paul immediately documents the fact that Jesus is the Son of God. If you have any problems there, he says the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is the unique and the only begotten Son of God the Father. That solves that real quickly for anybody who had

any question that he was writing.

What is his point here? I think his point is spiritual pride. That has been his subject all the way through chapter 14. Maybe we understand, but maybe somebody else doesn't. When that spiritual pride is there, and it reflects itself in scorning and demeaning and division, then what happens is we, as the body of Christ, are paralyzed in our ability to praise God. That's what he is saying. God inhabits the praise of His people, but you cannot praise until you have a walk with God. Worship is not something you feel. Worship is everything we've been talking about from chapter 12:-2, all the way to here. And when that relationship is right and we're worshipping God, then we can stand together. There may be a weaker brother holding this hand and a stronger brother holding this hand. That's alright. We may not have yet agreed. We don't give up our convictions. We don't give up our understanding. We have such a love for one another that we can join hands together and freely and openly with one voice glorify, bring recognition to and praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

How many times have you gone in to a church and your walk with God was not right? Something's wrong between you and a brother. Somehow maybe because of your great understanding of the Word of God, you're looking down on everybody else. They don't live like you so they must not be right with God anyway. You come in with that kind of attitude. Now, how quickly does it affect your praise? There cannot be one voice amongst God's people that can bring praise and glory back unto God.

We live out of our own convictions God has given to us. Paul is saying we should stand together with one voice and glorify and praise the God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and not have this kind of spiritual pride that comes maybe out of understanding. It may come from some other source. It doesn't matter. It's not what you understand that makes anybody spiritual. It's how you live in light of your understanding.

That has been the context of the whole book of Romans. He says in 1:17 the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith. Then he quotes out of Habakkuk 4, "for the righteous man shall live by his faith." In other words, if you understand it and you're not living it, then God the Holy Spirit has not produced the one mark upon you, which is love without hypocrisy. That's been the flow of everything he's talked about for the last three chapters. We can stand hand in hand, even though I've got the hand of a weaker brother, bless his heart, who can't eat meat. He's got to eat vegetables. He can only worship God on a certain day. Hey, that's alright. God loves him, and God in me is to love that brother. Grab his hand and together bring praise and glory back unto the Father. That's what Paul is trying to say.

I tell you what folks, there's more garbage in the church these days over people who are right but have taken their conviction. Now listen, if my conviction offends somebody, so be it. But if I offend somebody by the way I use my conviction, that makes it wrong. Because you see it's God who gave me the conviction to begin with. So Paul prays. And you can understand why he prays. There's no other way it's ever going to happen unless God does something.

Well the second thing he does, he moves from his prayer to a command. The command is found in verses 7 through 12. Now these are the verses I'm grouping together. You may fault me for it, but I hope you'll understand why I grouped them together. Verse 7 says, here's the command, "Wherefore, accept one another just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God."

Now to show you he's still in the same thought train, the word "accept" is the word *proslambano*. That's the word used back in 14:1. Go back and read it again because I want to show you what it does. He tells us to accept one another. Then he gives us the example of how Christ has accepted us. He does it again in chapter 15. Romans 14:1 reads, "Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions." *Proslambano* means to draw him to yourself. Did you ever find somebody that just irritates you because they don't understand, but you don't push them away? You draw them to yourself. That's the love of God in you, reaching out to that brother. Priscilla and Aquila drew Apollos in and helped him correct his doctrine. It's not that you push them away. You encourage them. You instruct them. You pray for them. But don't turn them away. Don't make them look like fools because they don't understand. Don't scorn them. Don't demean them. You see, they're precious people. "Accept one another," he said.

Then in verse 3 of chapter 14 he gives the example. He says, "Let not him who eats regard with contempt him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats, for God has accepted him." Paul's following the same thought pattern over in 15:7. "Wherefore, accept one another." The word "another" refers to another brother. He's talking about the Christian community here, both the stronger and the weaker. Just like in chapter 14, the example is God, Himself. Now, the next time you come across a brother in the family of God who doesn't understand it like you understand it, and just doesn't have it all together like you have it all together and you feel like you haven't got time for this brother, be real careful because our Lord Jesus Christ accepted him. He's our example; so therefore, accept one another.

I'll tell you folks. The weaker brother never thinks he's the weaker brother. He always thinks he's the stronger one. So it holds for both sides here. We are to give that same attitude towards one another, to receive one another. Never back off our convictions until God shows us. But what he's saying is don't push the other one away just because he doesn't understand what you understand.

Well, coming back to chapter 15, that's exactly what he's doing here. In chapter 14 he tells them what to do and gives them an example of Christ. In 15 he's doing the same thing: "Wherefore accept one another just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God." To the glory of God there would be God the Father. Whatever Jesus did was to bring glory to His Father. As a matter of fact, John 14 said His Father was working in Him. He didn't want it to appear as His work. He wanted them to see the Father who worked in Him. He became our example. As Jesus was to the Father, we are to Jesus. And everything that we do should bring glory to Him of His working in us. That's why Jesus accepted us. He said, "accept one another, just as Christ accepted us to the glory of God."

Now, what's the point? The point to me is accepting one another in the body of Christ with all of our warts, with all of our differences. Accepting one another in the body of Christ in the true character of Christ Himself brings glory to God when we're willing to do that. I think that's what Paul is saying. I think that's what he's been saying since 12:3. He's simply saying when this love is there, when this love is manifest in the body of Christ, when this love takes care of the ones who are hostile and the ones who are friendly, the ones who are weak, the ones who are strong, then it brings glory to God. God's working in the people. It's not just the people. It's God that's glorified. This is true for all of us.

Paul is just broadening the whole subject now. Remember, we're about to finish the book. So in chapter 15 he's just broadening it all out. He's moved from the stronger and the weaker to the whole body of Christ made of Jews and made up of Gentiles who have come to know Christ by faith. Who are the "us"? In verse 7 he says, "Wherefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God." The reason I grouped these verses together is because verses 8 through 12 tell us who the "us" is that he's talking about. He's talking about the Jews and the Gentiles. Let's look at that.

In verse 8 he talks about the Jews. He says in verse 8, "For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers." You've got to remember the flow of Romans. Back in 1:19-32, he talked about the Gentiles. Were they worthy of salvation? Were they worthy of being accepted? Absolutely not. As a matter of fact, they were openly rebellious. They didn't even want God in their vocabulary back in chapter 1. So Gentiles, he accepted them. Then in 2:1—3:20 he deals with the Jews. Then he sums both groups up together in 3:23 when he says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." I mean the whole bunch of them. None of them are worth it. They're all sinners.

Chapter 5 calls them, "Ungodly, sinners, enemies of God". So therefore, the whole group that he's talking about, the "us" that he's talking about, are the Jews and the Gentiles. There's not a thing about any of us that's worthy to be accepted. So therefore, Christ has accepted us. That's His grace. Now, we're to show that grace to one another.

Paul starts with the Jews first in 15:8 and then he says, "on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers." What does he mean when he says "on behalf of the truth of God"? God promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that he would bring a Messiah, a Redeemer through them. The seed would come through them and through the Jewish race. He even gave a covenant that said it would be of the seed of David that he would come. So God honored that. Jesus Christ was born on this earth as a Jewish baby. He came out of the family of the nation of Israel. He did that to confirm the truth and the promise that He gave to them back in the Old Testament.

Remember the promise that He gave to Abraham? He said, "I will make a great nation out of you and out of you all the nation shall be blessed." So not only did he come as a Jew to the circumcision, but he included the Gentiles. Paul spends verses 9-12 documenting Old Testament scriptures that promised the fact that it's not just Jew but it's Gentile. It's all people. None of us deserve it but He came to give that opportunity of salvation to both groups. So he says in verse 9, "and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy; as it is written, 'Therefore I will give praise to thee among the Gentiles, and I will sing to thy name.'" This is a quote from Psalm 18:49. If you look up Psalm 18:49, it won't have the word "Gentile" there. It'll have the word "nations." But the word "nations" is the word translated "Gentile" in the New Testament.

Then he quotes out of Deuteronomy 32:43 in Romans 15:10. He says, "And again he says, 'Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people.'" In other words it's going to be for both. Then he quotes out of Psalm 117:1 in verse 11: "And again, 'Praise the Lord all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples praise Him.'" Then he finishes by quoting out of Isaiah 11:10: "And again Isaiah says, 'There shall come the root of Jesse, and He who arises to rule over the Gentiles, in Him shall the Gentiles hope.'"

The reason I put those together is because of what Paul is doing here, he prays for these people to accept one another. I'm telling you, we had better be praying for one another because God's going to have to do a work in each of our hearts or we're never going to accept one another. He makes the command and then he shows the example in that command. He says, "You accept one another because Christ has accepted you."

You know folks, this is what we've lost. We're not awed anymore at salvation. We personally think we deserve to be saved. We talk a good game, but folks, when it comes to being grateful to God for what He's doing in our life, it's as if we have no appreciation at all. We deserve Hell. That's all we deserve. There's not one thing any of us deserve but Hell. Do we realize that God accepted us? God came to us. God did not scorn us. God died for us on the cross to enable us to be accepted by Him.

Paul says now if you have been accepted by Him, then you accept one another. There is never an excuse for us to demean or scorn a brother who doesn't maybe understand what we understand according to the grace that God has give us in our life. We'll never compromise our convictions? No, that's not what he's saying. He's saying, "Listen, that person is to be loved at all times and drawn to you, never pushed away because you're both going to stand before God one day. God's accepted him. God's accepted you. Neither one of you deserve it." That becomes the command and the standard by which He gives to us.

So he starts with a prayer, he goes to a command, and then in verse 13 he comes back to a prayer. Now, I'll tell you what folks, about the only way I think it's ever going to happen in the body of Christ today is if we just get on our face before God and pray for others, that they can come to a realization of relationships and how important they are in the body of Christ. He says in verse 13 something I think is very, very important. He says, "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." Do you see what he's saying in that verse? Fill you with all joy and peace in what? Present tense, believing.

I know sometimes we get lost in verses and words, but I want to keep coming back to something that is very simple in the book of Romans. He's talking about a relationship with God, folks. I can't make you have it. You can't make me have it. I've got choices to make. You've got choices to make. Whether or not we make the right choices will reflect in how we treat one another. It'll definitely reflect in our praise the next time we come back together. If you haven't been walking that way, what does it mean? Pistis is the word for faith. It comes from the word pisteuo, which is the word translated "believe."

You know, believing is not just what you understand. It's what you do in light of what you understand. It comes from the word peitho, and the word peitho means "O God, I'm so overwhelmed by your grace in my life. I'm so overwhelmed by who you are, and I'm so overwhelmed by your Word. God, I know my agenda was sending me to Hell. I don't want my agenda anymore God. So therefore, God, I'm willing to bow down before you. God, I do this as an act of surrender. I give you my will, Lord. I choose to have your agenda in my life. God, whatever it is in my walk, whatever it is that you want, I'm willing to do that in the grace and the power which the Holy Spirit will give me to do it. I'm willing, Father, to believe you. Father, I know that people can't know what I believe by what I say. They know what I believe by how I live."

Now, when you're believing, folks, believing Him day by day, moment by moment, living obedient surrendered to Christ, that's when you're going to be so filled with joy and peace. That's going to reflect itself in your relationships big, big time. All of a sudden you're not spiritually proud. As a matter of fact, you're overwhelmed with what you don't know, much less the grace of what God's given you that you understand. People become important to you. You know, we've mentioned relationships many times over and over and over again. I want to tell you something. One day when you stand before God, when our deeds are judged, as we look back at chapter 14, remember something. There are not going to be any buildings up there that we built. There are not going to be any programs that we wrote and put our names on. But there are going to be people there and we're going to see whether or not we have walked righteously before God by those that have been affected by that when we get there.

Relationships, that's what Paul's saying. He prays for them, and then he just backs off and commands them. Then he comes right back and prays for them. May God fill you with joy and peace and find you believing, present tense. All the time let God's Word be that grid for your convictions, making choices based upon what God wants. When you're living that way in your relationships, you won't have to worry about what we've preached from chapter 12 to chapter 15. It'll take care of itself.

Does that remind you of anything? Look over in James 1:22. James says exactly the same thing. He says, "But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves." Doers of the Word. In other words, that's what a believer is. You're a believer if you're a doer of the Word. If you not a doer of the Word, then you're not a believer. That's what he's talking about. You can't just hear it and understand it. You've got to obey it. That makes you a believer. And he says that if you're not doing that, then what you've done, you've deluded yourself. The word delude is paralozomai. It means you have chosen to take the Word that you understand and set it over here. You've walked over here and you've got a circumstance you're dealing with in your

life, but you're not willing to reason it out according to what God says. You reason it out apart from God's Word and you've just cheated yourself of all the joy and peace you could've had by simply walking believing Him, obeying, doing what His Word had to say.

He says in verses 23 and 24, "For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror: for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was." How many times do you get into the Word or you come and hear the Word and God just backs you into a corner? It's as if you're in a room all by yourself and He shows you where you are and where you need to be. It's so clear what He wants you to do. But you have no intention of ever doing it. So therefore, you get up and walk out and as soon as you walk out, you have forgotten what He has just shown you as to what you were. As a result, you're probably worse off than you were when you came in. God showed you, but you didn't do it. You walked out to live your own way. Do you think you're going to have joy and peace doing that as a believer? No. You are one miserable person if you're not living according to what God's Word is building into your life. You're miserable. You keep buying this or trying that thinking it's going to bring something to your life. It does not do that. You keep moving locations, finding another house in another place. You get there and you find out it wasn't what you were looking for.

What's wrong? I'll tell you what's wrong. If you're a believer, you need to get that relationship right with Christ. Get the Word of God in you and start living accordingly and you're going to discover a peace and joy that you didn't know existed. You're going to see people in the body of Christ different than you've ever seen them before. Automatically it works that love within you. Verse 25 says, "But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does." The word for blessed is makarios. It does not mean to hear circumstantially, it means inside. You're going to be so fully satisfied, filled with joy and peace. You didn't realize that could ever happen. It only comes when a believer is willing to say, "yes," give up his own agenda and say, "God, I just want your Word in my life. Renew my mind. Transform my character."

That's Romans 12:1-2. And the results are in your relationships to everybody, the weaker brother, the stronger brother, the person who is not a brother, the hostile, the friendly, the whole thing, the government, the taxes, everything of Chapter 12 all the way through 15. People will just look at you and say something is right on the inside of that person. That's what it's all about. That's Romans. Walk by faith and it'll show itself in your relationships one to another. What's the perfect law of liberty? I think what he's talking about is the law of hearing. The law says when I hear it and do it, I'm free. I'm free from myself for the first time. I can live in the liberty and the power of the Holy Spirit of God, enabled to do what God has asked me to.

So you can see why Paul prays. He's got a tough job here. There was a lot of spiritual pride in Rome. Then you can see why he would back up and just command them. Wait a minute, we've got the example of Christ. What are we doing? He lives in us. That's the way He lived. Then he comes back and says, "I've got to pray again. I pray that you be found believing, filled with joy and peace and it's going to show up in the way that you treat one another."

How are you doing with your walk with God? How are you doing in your relationships to other people who are all around you? What Paul is trying to do is get us to wake up and realize if you're going to play a game with church, you might as well stay home and watch television. But if you're serious with God, then get serious with Him. Get in His Word. Get down before Him. Obey Him. He'll fill you so full with joy and peace that your relationships will be different for all of eternity. That's what he's saying.