

Romans 15

Leon L. Combs, Ph.D.

Started February 19, 2005

“Finished”: April 2, 2005

The first few verses of this chapter continue the concepts of chapter 14.

Rom 15:1 “Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves.

Rom 15:2 Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to his edification.

Rom 15:3 For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached Thee fell upon Me."”

If only we could all obey these first two verses all the time, what a different place the world would be! We live in the “now generation” as everyone is seeking self-fulfillment and self actualization. It is not easy to have the Christian attitudes or everyone would be acting in these ways. Actually it is impossible to live as the above two verses exhort us without always exhibiting “agape” love – the love that reaches out to others with no regard for what they do back to me. This attitude is what Paul displayed in so much of his writings as he had no regard for himself, but total sacrifice for others. Now Paul was not perfect in this attitude for only Jesus could be perfect in His response to other people. So we should not expect a perfect response from ourselves to all people. However we should have perfection as our goal while simultaneously realizing that we will never achieve that goal.

Today people tend to “cocoon” in their homes. But Christians are told to interact with each other and practice our gifts to the edification of other Christians (see my study on Ephesians). We need each other, and expressing that need is also against the tide in a world where everyone is supposed to be “self actualized”. Jesus received a horde of accusations of violating God’s Law and of living a sinful life and He was the perfect person who lived a perfect, sinless life before God. The problem with Jesus was not that He broke any of God’s Laws but that He practiced them perfectly and the judgment of sinful people was upon Him because they could not live such a life and they could not stand to be in the presence of perfection when their ideas of perfection were judged sinful. But Jesus absorbed all of their accusations and went to His physical death as an innocent lamb upon Whom all the sins of God’s chosen people was heaped. Jesus lived a sinless life and died with our sins upon Him for us. He was always in perfect obedience.

We are to build up each other and the building that we are building is not a temple that is readily seen by the world. The temple is our bodies and the bodies of other believers:

1Cor 3:16 “Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”

1Cor 3:17 If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.”

Every true child of God is a temple of the Holy Spirit and we are to help build up that temple in our body and in the body of every other true child of God. We are also to be an outreach to others as we live that holy life.

Eph 2:19 "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household,

Eph 2:20 having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,

Eph 2:21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord;

Eph 2:22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit."

What a great mystery this is! The whole story of this building is something else that I do not entirely understand. But I trust God is sovereign and that He has a plan so that somehow we all together are a dwelling of the Holy Spirit. To build something there are some things that we need to know.

1.) We need to build on a firm foundation and God has given us some information. We know that Jesus is the corner stone so that the building must be based upon all of the teachings of Him and that includes the Old and the New Testament.

Matt 7:24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock.

Matt 7:25 "And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock.

Matt 7:26 "And everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand.

Matt 7:27 "And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall."

The following verse has been misinterpreted, but the rock is the corner stone and that stone is Jesus Christ, not Peter"

Matt 16:18 "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it."

So, with the teachings and the work of Jesus Christ we will have a solid building that is a glorious temple of the Holy Spirit that constantly works to edify the children of God and that also reaches out to the rest of the world.

We know that our gifts are part of the building:

Eph 4:11 "And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,

Eph 4:12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;

Eph 4:13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ.”

Rom 15:4 “For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

Rom 15:5 Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus;

Rom 15:6 that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Hope, as we have discussed previously is an absolute to a Christian and we obtain that hope by studying the Scriptures and applying them to our lives. So much has been written and preserved for us by God’s people before Paul and until the last Holy Book written by John, the beloved of Jesus. I think that we often need to think about John’s reaction to seeing Jesus in His Holiness as we remember how close John and Jesus were while Jesus lived on earth in human form:

Rev 1:17 “And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as a dead man. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last,”

John saw Jesus in His Holiness and could not bear to stand before Him but fell at His feet like a dead man! This action will be the action of everyone who dies and sees Jesus in His glorification. But only to His children will Jesus say a word of encouragement and tell not to be afraid. Everyone else will continue to be horrified at being in the presence of such sinlessness, holiness, and the eyes that see deep into the soul. To many people Jesus will say:

Matt 7:21 “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven.

Matt 7:22 “Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’

Matt 7:23 “And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’”

We should be so satisfied and so grateful for what God has done for us that we should indeed dedicate ourselves 100% to living for Him and in one accord and with one voice we should be glorifying God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. I am often ashamed of how little I do glorify God everywhere that I am. Here I can also rest upon the Word of God that He has prepared paths in which I will walk.

Eph 2:10 “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

We were not just saved from the wrath of God and then left alone. We were given the righteousness of Jesus Christ, adopted as God's children, and then put into the paths for good works that God also had prepared for us before the foundation of the world.

God also gives us perseverance and encouragement so that we might be of the same mind toward each other as we have been discussing as we study chapters 14 and 15.

Psalm 69 is a messianic psalm that we should all study. Jesus lived a lifetime of insults and accusations that were not based on fact. Even Jesus faced hatred in His family. Mary had at least six brothers and sisters:

Mark 6:3 "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?" And they took offense at Him."

Psalm 69:8 tells us:

Psalm 69:8 "I have become estranged from my brothers, And an alien to my mother's sons."

John 7:2 "Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths, was at hand.

John 7:3 His brothers therefore said to Him, "Depart from here, and go into Judea, that Your disciples also may behold Your works which You are doing.

John 7:4 "For no one does anything in secret, when he himself seeks to be known publicly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world."

John 7:5 For not even His brothers were believing in Him.

John 7:6 Jesus therefore said to them, "My time is not yet at hand, but your time is always opportune."

We also will endure insults and injuries because of our love for Jesus and as we attempt to live out our holiness in this sinful world. But there is an endless love awaiting us when we have accomplished God's purposes here and that promise of the reward is sufficient to keep us going in hard times and good times.

Rom 15:7 "Wherefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God."

Rom 15:8 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,

Rom 15:9 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."

We are to accept each other in the same way that Christ also accepted us and to do this to the glory of God. I have sometimes thought about carrying around a mirror to show people how they look when they are condemning Christians for believing some of the pernts that I mentioned in the previous chapter. Some are certainly not accepting fellow Christians when their face shows such anger and indignation because another Christian

believes that there will be rapture! I could add many of the pernts in the previous sentence. I would also have to constantly be looking at my face when I encounter people who say that they are Christians but that they believe in reincarnation or some other topic that I know is not Biblical! There are many Christians who indeed are children of God but who have not been taught the things of God. We need to teach them with love and tenderness as we bring them to the knowledge of God's ways through His Scripture. A true Christian will be willing to be taught and, if he believes in reincarnation he will be very pleased to learn the truth of the following:

Heb 9:27 "And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment,"

A teachable spirit is certainly one sign of a Christian and since this Scripture clearly tells us that we only have "one time around the track", he will gladly through out his belief in reincarnation.

So accept each other, but be ready to teach the Word of God and to be dogmatic about the points that we mentioned in Chapter 14. Certainly verse 9 is especially gratifying to me, a Gentile. Jesus came to save all of His children from the wrath of God.

John 3:36 "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

We cannot begin to imagine how horrible our sins are to the Holy God and we cannot begin to understand the holiness of God. We also cannot understand all of His plan:

Ecc 3:11 "He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end."

To me this implies that we will never develop a unified field theory, which was Einstein's dream and modern physicists still seek. This verse is also coupled with the following:

Deut 29:29 "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law."

There are then many things in the universe that we as human beings will never understand and we must be able to say: "I don't know" and also know that we may never know whatever it was into which we inquired. But there is much that has been revealed to us and God has given these things to us so that we may glorify Him and observe all the words of God's law. So we need to apply all that God has made known to us for the edification of ourselves, the edification of other children of God, and the building up of the temple of God for His glory.

Rom 15:10 “And again he says, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people."

Rom 15:11 And again, "Praise the Lord all you Gentiles, And let all the peoples praise Him.

Rom 15:12 “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."”

Christ came to save His children from among both the Jews and the Gentiles. God is no respecter of persons, but He has His children among all the nations of the world. Without God there is no hope for any person in the world. Paul tells us that there is much value in being a Jew:

Rom 3:1 “Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision?

Rom 3:2 Great in every respect. First of all that they were entrusted with the oracles of God.”

The Jews had the Word of God and the Gentiles did not. God used them to carry forth the history of God’s working with His chosen people to bring about the change from the chaos of Satan to the order of God. God worked almost exclusively with the Jews from Abraham to Jesus so that there literally was no hope for anyone but the Jews. But Gentile salvation was also promised in the Old Testament (Hosea 2:23, 1:10; Isaiah 10:22-23 and 1:9). In the above verses that we are studying, Paul takes comments from the Old Testament.

1. Psalm 18:49

Psa 18:49 “Therefore I will give thanks to Thee among the nations, O Lord, And I will sing praises to Thy name.”

Note that David does not say to the nations but he says among the nations, meaning all the Gentile nations and this word change implies that the Gentiles are going to be an active part of the praising of Davie.

2. Deut 32:43

Deut 32:43 “Rejoice, O nations, with His people; For He will avenge the blood of His servants, And will render vengeance on His adversaries, And will atone for His land and His people.”

This is a praise song, the song of Moses, but notice that the nations (Gentiles) are also included here.

3: Psalm 117:1

Psa 117:1 “Praise the Lord, all nations; Laud Him, all peoples!

Psa 117:2 For His lovingkindness is great toward us, And the truth of the Lord is everlasting. Praise the Lord!”

Here again note that David is telling all the nations (Gentiles) to praise the Lord because of His lovingkindness toward us.

4. Isaiah 11:10

Isaiah 11:10 “Then it will come about in that day That the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, Who will stand as a signal for the peoples; And His resting place will be glorious.”

Jesse was the father of David so this text is looking forward to the coming of the day of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messianic Age. Paul is saying that like the Jews, the Gentiles also have hope before the almighty Holy God because of the coming life and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Praise God!

America is a nation in decline, but it also has the hope of all Gentile nations. William Bennett was secretary of education under President Reagan and was drug czar under President George Bush. He gave a speech called “Getting Used to Decadence” to a meeting of the Heritage Foundation (number 477) in 1993. This speech is worth reading for all of us today also. For the period of 1960 - 1990, there has been a 560% increase in violent crime, more than a 400% increase in illegitimate births, a quadrupling in divorces, a tripling of the percentage of children living in single-parent homes, more than a 200% increase in the teenage suicide rate, and a drop of 75 points in the average SAT scores of high school students. The picture since 1990 has not improved. In 1940 teachers were asked to identify the top problems in our schools and they reported: talking out of turn, chewing gum, making noise, running in the halls, cutting in line, dress code infractions, and littering. The same question asked in 1990 resulted in the answers: drug use, alcohol use, pregnancy, suicide, rape, robbery, and assault. Certainly today the problems are even worse.

Bennett traced our problem to what the ancients called *acedia*, borrowing a term meaning “an aversion to and a negation of spiritual things”. Bennett called it a corruption of the heart. He also said that even if our streets were to become paved with gold, if our children did not learn to walk in goodness, justice, and mercy then the American experiment will have failed.

The world no longer respects America as a place of welcome for the masses and of promise for a new beginning. Instead there is fear among the new people coming to America and it is justified. Recent results of “justice” in our judicial system also testify loudly to the decline of America.

But there is still hope because Jesus is the promise to all nations if they will turn themselves over to Him. The only way that America will become a great nation is if God has mercy on us and brings about a revival toward Him. Of course we do not know the plans of God. We only know that they are perfect plans. We do not know whom He has chosen to become His children here or anywhere. It may be that our purpose has been fulfilled as the nation that allowed Israel to become a nation again. There is no need for

us to spend time wondering and worrying about the status of America in the history of God's world. We should spend all of our time studying the Word of God as it applies to our daily living, using our gifts for our edification and the edification of fellow children of God, building up the temple of the congregation of God's children, and reaching out to the needs of our neighbors. God will take care of His big plans and He does not need our advice and we do not need to understand. Remember the story of Job and that he was not released from his torment until he really understood that he could not understand God's will and he was only to obey. May each of us learn that lesson quickly.

The following verse is the first benediction given by Paul in this wonderful book.

Rom 15:13 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."

In a sense this is the end of the book of Romans for what follows is mainly personal in nature. There are two more benedictions: Rom 15:33 and Rom 16:20 and a doxology in Romans 16:25-27. Barnhouse devoted six studies to this verse in his radio series on Romans.

He says: "This verse is a great summary of the blessed life in the brotherhood formed by our oneness in Jesus Christ. The source of that life is the God of hope. The measure of that life is that we shall be filled with all joy and peace. The quality of that life is joy and peace that he desires for us. The condition of that life is faith – we enter it by believing. The purpose of that life is that we might abound. The enabling of that life is divine power. The director of that life is the Holy Spirit."

Note that "hope" is used twice. God is both the object of hope and the origin of hope. As we have said many times, hope has a very different meaning for the Christian than for the non-Christian. To us, and regarding anything concerning God, hope is an absolute certainty because God is the origin of hope and God is sovereign. Without God there is no hope in the absolute sense and we are indeed in a hopeless situation.

Eph 2:12 "remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world."

But now we have absolute hope because we are one with God just as Jesus is one with the Father:

John 17:21 "that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me."

Joy and peace are our possession because of the work of Jesus Christ and Jesus wants this joy and peace to be permanent in our life.

John 17:13 “But now I come to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy made full in themselves.”

This chapter of John is very special because Jesus is praying for you and me in the now:

John 17:20 “I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word;”

The topics of joy and peace deserve a total study and such is very important in our daily lives, but beyond the scope of what we are trying to do now: present an overview of this wonderful book for the edification of all of God’s children. I will say that there are two kinds of peace: there is the peace of God and the peace with God. We have peace with God only because we are presentable to God through the holiness and work of Jesus Christ. We can then have the peace of God as we live in the world by the increase of our sanctification that requires our cooperation as we work out the salvation in our daily lives.

Of course without faith there is none of the above: hope, joy, and peace. Faith is a gift of God and can be thought of as the enabling power of God that is only available as a gift from God to His chosen children. I have a paper on Faith on my Living Theology website and I encourage you to read it for further edification on this topic. Finally there is the power of the Holy Spirit Who enables us to increase in our sanctification, which leads to more hope, peace, and joy. All of these wonderful achievements are available for the child of God through His power. Amen!

The next verse begins a discussion by Paul of his personal ministry and plans, some of which were never completed as far as we know.

Rom 15:14 “And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able also to admonish one another.

Paul also here gives us three guidelines for evaluation ourselves or our local congregations:

1.) Full of goodness

We can return to Romans 3:13-18 for an awful description of how we were before God raised us from spiritual death and this is a really awful state of affairs. We had **NO** goodness at all! The only way that anyone can turn from the state of Romans 3 to being full of goodness is by the absolute work of God without any works of our own. One part of the fruit of the Holy Spirit is goodness:

Gal 5:22 “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

Gal 5:23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”

Another source of comfort for us is the promised good works that we are to perform:

Eph 2:10 “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

So God Himself has provided goodness for us in our walk here on earth. But the amount of that goodness that is produced is somewhat dependent upon our cooperation with the Holy Spirit in our sanctification process. What a wonderful place the local congregation would be if everyone were indeed full of goodness. So we must concentrate on ourselves to constantly let God examine our hearts and to cooperate with the work of the Holy Spirit in our daily living in this hostile world.

2Peter 1:10 “Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble;

2Peter 1:11 for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.”

Amen!

2.) Filled with all knowledge

What a goal! How do we become filled with all knowledge? First we have to recognize that this filling is not to be of quantum mechanics or surgical expertise, but the knowledge of God. This insight is not to encourage anyone to go to a monastery, but to first seek the kingdom of God and then to work out that real knowledge in whatever field of work God has placed us.

Matt 6:33 “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you.”

Notice the reading below (I bolded “real”):

*Phil 1:9 “And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in **real** knowledge and all discernment,*

Phil 1:10 so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ;

Phil 1:11 having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.”

We need to fill our minds with the real knowledge of the true and only God.

3.) Able to admonish/teach one another

The word “teach” appears 35 times in the New Testament and many of the quotes are when Jesus went to teach. We must be able to teach and we must be teachable. Today we had a wonderful meeting of our Fellowship of Christian Employees at KSU. We actually occupied more space than we were supposed to and I saw one person who I

knew was not a Christian and I greeted him. He said “is this the AAUP meeting?” I said “no, this is the Fellowship of Christian Employees meeting.” He turned very dark and went away. The difference between him and me was the difference between day and night, and I mean that literally. I probably should have thought through the situation and volunteered to give up some of our space, but he was gone before I fully realized what had happened. But the point is that the FCE people had a countenance that was totally different from the worldly person and I could really feel it. This is the discernment to which Paul refers in Phil 1:9. When we are more filled with the Word of God we also have more discernment of the world and we are to use both with wisdom.

The “great commission” tells us also to go and teach all the nations.

Matt 28:19 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

Matt 28:20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Jesus told us to teach all the people that He saves and not just to teach but to teach them to observe all that He tells us through the apostles. Just knowledge is not enough. We are also to observe what we learn and that means to use all the knowledge with wisdom.

These are three pretty tough guidelines! But we are a temple of the Holy Spirit.

**Rom 15:15 But I have written very boldly to you on some points, so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God,
Rom 15:16 to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, that my offering of the Gentiles might become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.”**

Paul now adds an emphasis to all that he has been saying during this entire chapter. He is reminding them – and us – of the great importance of what he has been saying. Since God gave Paul this magnificent grace he feels a great obligation to work hard to help his brothers and sisters in Jesus to understand the importance of his sayings.

I don’t think that we really understand our role here as God’s children. We are to be a sacrifice:

Rom 12:1 “I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.”

We are to be a sacrifice to God just as was Jesus:

Eph 5:2 “and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.”

The offering and sacrifice of Jesus was a fragrant aroma because He was perfect. We can never be perfect in and of ourselves, but we can be sanctified by the Holy Spirit (Rom 15:16). Paul made it clear in the above two verses that he was a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles and that his offering would be the Gentiles. He did not say that he was an offering to the Gentiles but that his offering would be the Gentiles. Every person that God caused to be born again and then ministered to by Paul would become an acceptable sacrifice to God because each person would be sanctified by the Holy Spirit. God gave the chosen people their faith, Paul taught them the true knowledge of Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit sanctified these children. The same process is going on with us Gentiles:

- 1.) God gave us faith and caused us to be born again spiritually.
- 2.) The wrath of God that justice required be poured out on us was poured out on Jesus over 2000 years ago.
- 3.) The righteousness of Jesus Christ was put into our account so that we could be righteous before Holy God.
- 4.) We are being taught by messengers of God with the true knowledge of Jesus' teaching to the apostles.
- 5.) The Holy Spirit is sanctifying us as we live in our decaying bodies.

We now then live by learning how to give up our sin nature and live a life of sacrifice to God. We don't seek self actualization, with "self" meant as our human nature that can become somehow perfect. We totally give up any path of perfection in our own power and our own abilities. Instead we die to self and live for Jesus so that the Holy Spirit can do the work of sanctification in us. We have to be willing to be last and put every other Christian before us. All of the apostles except John were martyred. Jesus as our example was crucified. None of these people attained any worldly power or material wealth. Even Jesus Christ had no place to put his head. But all of them died majestically and are all living again in the very presence of God. Of course the death of Jesus is very special and it is because of what He did that any of us have hope. One day I will biologically cease to function and I will then be with God. Then one day my body will be raised in a glorified state and I will live forever in the presence of God glorifying Him and loving Him and all of His many children.

Learning to be a sacrifice is not easy! We have to totally reckon ourselves to be dead to sin. The following verse is in the King James Version because the New American Standard version does not use the "southern" word reckon:

Rom 6:11 "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Then once we have really reckoned ourselves to be dead to sin, we will then totally realize the following (also in the King James Version):

Rom 8:18 "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

How do we become dead to sin? We follow the path given us above:

- 1.) **Full of goodness**
- 2.) **Filled with all knowledge**
- 3.) **Able to admonish/teach one another**

As we participate more with these goals we will be more understanding of what it means to be a living sacrifice although I am not certain that I can ever really understand the fullness of being a living sacrifice. Certainly we should all meditate every day on being a living sacrifice. Surely there are occasions during every day that we can apply the principle of being a living sacrifice. I recommend that we take on the task of writing each day at least one way that we did or could have been a living sacrifice by giving up ourselves to help someone else.

Rom 15:17 “Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God.

Rom 15:18 For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed,

Rom 15:19 in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.”

Rom 15:20 “And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, that I might not build upon another man's foundation;

Rom 15:21 but as it is written, "They who had no news of Him shall see, And they who have not heard shall understand.””

Rom 15:22 “For this reason I have often been hindered from coming to you;

The above two verses are acting in a self-sacrificial way and are more excellent guidelines for us to follow. To follow those two verses would mean that we did not boast about anything that we only in ourselves did during the day. If we behaved in the way that Paul did as he stated here then other Gentiles might also use our behavior as an example for their life in Christ. Paul wanted to preach the Gospel in areas of the world where the Word had not been preached. Paul yearned to see God awaken other people who had not yet been awakened. He truly was a missionary/apostle. If any of you have witnessed a person's eyes being opened by God then you know the excitement of seeing God do this magnificent work of creation. This is not a work that Paul could do and it is not a work that any of us can do. Only God can cause a person to be born again, but when He does this miracle through our meager words and deeds it is the most beautiful sight that we can behold in this world. Paul was hindered because this work of rebirthing people is what Satan wants to stop. But Satan cannot stop God. If God wanted to cause Jane Doe in Duluth to be born again through some word or deed of mine than such will indeed happen. It is such a grand reward to see Jane to be awakened that I should want to be there and be involved with all of my strength. God does not need me or you, but He does choose to use us in these miracles and what a wonderful blessing it is for us.

Have any of you ever seen a baby take its first breath of air? I have not, but my wife saw our youngest grandson take his first birth and it was such a beautiful sight that she said that she could hardly breathe! Through tears she saw that miracle and praised the Lord. The same reaction is experienced by anyone who witnesses another human being become born again by God in that miracle. This reward is a wonderful incentive for us to want to be as perfect a living sacrifice as possible.

Rom 15:23 but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you

Rom 15:24 whenever I go to Spain-- for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while—

Paul did not get to Spain as far as we know. But we see his longing to want to see the Roman Christians and he hoped that when he went to Spain he would get to visit with those other saints. He of course did finally get to Rome, but the conditions were not what he had thought that they would be. He did feel like he had done all the work he was called to do in this particular place of the globe and he would be leaving on another trip to help the Christians in Jerusalem.

Rom 15:25 but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints.

Rom 15:26 For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.

Rom 15:27 Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things.”

Rom 15:28 “Therefore, when I have finished this, and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs, I will go on by way of you to Spain.

There is a wonderful story behind his words here. Christians in one area had more material blessings than the Christians in Jerusalem so they had taken up a collection and Paul was taking the collection to the Christians in Jerusalem. These few verses also are echoed in the book of James, who was the leader of the church in Jerusalem. If our faith does not result in actions then our faith might not be real. We should have a great desire to help other children of God who are less fortunate materially than we are. The Jerusalem saints were among the poorest in the region and Rome was rich because all commerce went through there. The story of Macedonia and Achaia is a wonderful story because they were not rich either but they gave out of their poverty.

2 Cor 8:1 “Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia,

2 Cor 8:2 that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality.

2 Cor 8:3 For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability they gave of their own accord,

*2 Cor 8:4 begging us with much entreaty for the favor of participation in the support of the saints,
2 Cor 8:5 and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.”*

These people were not rich but they gave to help other Christians. It is interesting to know some data about giving in America. Those below the poverty line give about 5% of their income to charity, those in the middle bracket give about 7%, but those who make above \$100,000 per year average giving at about 2% of their income. The Macedonians were poor and went through a lot of severe trials, but they gave for the needs of others.

James also spoke about the necessity of giving as a proof that we have real faith:

*James 2:15 “If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,
James 2:16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled;
notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?
James 2:17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.”*

Paul had a very clear view of how we are to help each other and how we are to be content with what God has given us. Also note from the below that Paul had to learn how to be content. God has given us so much, but we all still have to learn how to be content with our blessings. God is glorified when we are satisfied with what He has given us for when we learn that He is in control we can then relax in our conditions and know that He is working in the hearts of other children to help us just as these people helped Paul.

Phil 4:11 “Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.

Phil 4:12 I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.

Phil 4:13 I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

Phil 4:14 Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction.”

Paul’s seal on the fruit (the money offering) of the givers means that he ordained it to be from God’s people for God’s people. All of it went to the people in need, not 50%, but 100%. All of this also teaches us why the tithe is not mentioned in the New Testament except in a derogatory sense. What does a living sacrifice own? Of course he/she owns nothing so there is nothing to tithe. A person who is a living sacrifice gives all to God and he/she owns nothing. When God then calls for some of His “stuff” to be given to other children of God, a living sacrifice freely gives of time, money, and effort.

Rom 15:29 And I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fulness of the blessing of Christ.”

We know that Paul did go to Rome, but in chains. But nevertheless this verse is part of Scripture that indeed was fulfilled even though Paul did not know at the time how it would be fulfilled. Paul came in the fullness of the blessing of Christ. He brought with him the full teaching of Christ for the people of Rome. He also brought with him to impart to the people the fruit of the Spirit even though he was in chains. Perhaps because he was a prisoner he could completely show forth the fruit of the Spirit. When one is suffering or a prisoner for the faith then he/she can really demonstrate the joy and peace of Jesus Christ for it is not the surroundings that bring forth this joy and peace, but it is the power of God. All of us should be very aware of always showing forth the fruit of the Holy Spirit in all of our circumstances.

**Rom 15:30 “Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me,
Rom 15:31 that I may be delivered from those who are disobedient in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints;
Rom 15:32 so that I may come to you in joy by the will of God and find refreshing rest in your company.**

Paul asked all the readers to pray for him in his work, for his protection from the disobedient people, and that his bringing of offerings for Jerusalem would be acceptable to all of God’s children there. If those events occurred then he would then be able to come to them and find rest in the company of those saints in Rome, if it would be the will of God. It was God’s will for Paul to get to Rome, but in chains. He also did find rest in their company as he continued to teach and to preach even when in chains. Dr. Boice tells us that prayer is:

- 1.) Not useless
- 2.) Effective
- 3.) Necessary
- 4.) Difficult
- 5.) Commanded

Our prayers are never to change God’s mind or to bring something to His attention that He did not know. Our prayers are to change ourselves and others as God still accomplishes His will in all circumstances. So even though things don’t seem to work out like we thought we wanted them to work out, our prayers are not useless because God shows us that His plan is better. Our prayers are effective and necessary in the sanctification process that the Holy Spirit is working in our lives. It is indeed difficult to know what to pray for and indeed being in a state of prayer can help to mold our prayer into the will of God. There is no way for me to know whether or not it is better for someone to live even though I want him/her to live. So I pray for healing but I know that God may have another motive and a greater plan to work out in the death of that person. Certainly God commands us to pray as a means of our becoming one with Him. Jesus taught us to pray:

Matt 6:9 "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

Matt 6:10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

Matt 6:11 Give us this day our daily bread.

Matt 6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

Matt 6:13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."

This prayer is then the model prayer for all of us to pray.

Rom 15:33 Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen."

Here is the second benediction and what a blessing it is also for us! Paul wanted everyone who read this material to have the presence of the God of peace to be with them all. I can only say what Paul said: "Amen".

References

1. All Bible quotations are from the New American Standard Bible, Moody Press, 1975.
2. James Montgomery Boice, "Romans, Volume 4, The New Humanity", Romans 12 - 16, Baker Book House, 2001.
3. John R. W. Stott, "Your Mind Matters", InterVarsity Press, 1972.
4. Harry Blamires, "The Christian Mind", Servant Publications, 1978.
5. R. C. Sproul, "Focus on the Bible, Romans", Christian Focus Publications, 1994.