

Romans 14:1–12 (ESV)

November 2, 2025

14 As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. ² One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. ³ Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. ⁴ Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

⁵ One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶ The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. ⁷ For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. ⁸ For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. ⁹ For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

¹⁰ Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; ¹¹ for it is written,

“As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me,
and every tongue shall confess to God.”

¹² So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

I. Introduction

The gospel unites believers of differing consciences under one Lord. While some are strong in faith and others weak, all stand or fall before the same Master, Jesus Christ. Therefore, we must receive one another without despising or judging, for judgment belongs to God alone. Our lives and deaths are unto the Lord who redeemed us, so every act of faithfulness must be shaped by love and humility rather than pride or criticism.

II. Exposition and Reflection

1. Receive One Another Without Contempt (vv. 1–4)

- Welcome those weak in faith, not to argue or correct them on disputable matters. The church should be a place of grace where newer or more cautious believers are nurtured, not nitpicked.

- Disagreements over secondary issues (worship styles, dietary choices, schooling, or other traditions) should never undermine gospel fellowship.
 - God Himself sustains His servants. Our acceptance of one another flows from God's prior acceptance of us in Christ.
 - We are not the lords of each other's conscience. The Lord alone determines the faithfulness of His servant.
 - **Application:** Before criticizing a fellow believer's convictions on a matter of wisdom, ask "am I trying to serve them or shape them into my image?"
 - **Reflect:** What causes friction between "strong" and "weak" believers today? How can mature believers use their freedom to build up, not look down?
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2. Live in Honor of the Lord (vv. 5–9)

- Each believer must be fully convinced in his own mind. Conscience is a sacred trust before God, not something to be coerced by others.
 - Whatever we do, whether eating or abstaining, observing or not, must be done unto the Lord. Every act of daily life should aim at honoring Christ, not pleasing people.
 - Christ's lordship covers both life and death. Our unity is not in our uniformity of practice but in our shared submission to Jesus as Lord.
 - Differences in conviction can become means of glorifying Christ when we focus on His ownership of us rather than our personal opinions.
 - **Application:** When issues of conscience arise ask, "Am I doing this for the Lord's sake or for the approval of a certain group of people?"
 - **Reflect:** How does remembering that "we belong to the Lord" change the way we think about conscience differences within the church?
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3. God Alone Is Judge (vv. 10–12)

- We must not despise or condemn one another, because each of us will stand before the judgment seat of God.
- Only the Lord can rightly evaluate motives. External, corporate, conformity never replaces inward, personal, devotion.
- Remembering our shared accountability should humble us and quiet the urge to control others' convictions in matters of wisdom.

- Love leads us to patience; trusting that God is at work in His people at different paces and through different means.
 - **Application:** Think more about your own coming judgment, and you'll be less eager to pass judgment on others. Unity grows where humility rules.
 - **Reflect:** How might the reality of final judgment help me respond graciously in areas of disagreement?
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Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Weak in Faith*, a sermon on Romans 14:1

"Weak in the faith" does not mean "weak in faith." Lloyd-Jones explains: "Being weak in faith means that you haven't power in your faith. You believe things, but you are not so ready to trust yourself to them." However, the phrase in Romans 14 refers to being "weak in the faith," which means "weak with respect to the faith" - someone who is weak "in his understanding of the teaching concerning the Christian salvation in its outworking." These are people who understand salvation but struggle with applying faith principles consistently to daily life issues.

D. A. Carson, *10 Reflections on Disputable Matters*

Disputed ≠ Indifferent:

Just because something is debated doesn't mean it is debatable. Foundational doctrines (e.g., the Trinity, the deity of Christ, the resurrection) and moral truths (e.g., sexual ethics) remain indisputable, even if contested.

Scriptural Exegesis Determines Indisputability:

What belongs in the category of indifferent things depends on faithful, careful interpretation of Scripture, not on the presence of disagreement. Sound exegesis guards core truths like Christ's deity and biblical sexual ethics.

Weak Conscience and Indifferent Acts (1 Cor 8):

Some actions (e.g., eating food offered to idols) are not intrinsically sinful, but violating one's conscience is. The weak must not act against conscience, even in matters of indifferent things, lest their conscience be damaged.

Love Limits Liberty (1 Cor 8):

The strong, though free to act in indifferent things, should refrain if doing so would harm a weaker believer's conscience. Love, not legalism, governs freedom.

Context Can Shift an Indifferent Thing to Indisputable:

Neutral actions may become sinful in certain contexts—e.g., eating idol food in a pagan ritual (1 Cor 10:14–22). What is indifferent in one setting may become wrong in another if it implies idolatry or neglect of worship.

Cultural Context Defines Moral Weight:

Paul circumcised Timothy for mission flexibility (Acts 16:3) but refused Titus's circumcision when it compromised the gospel (Gal 2:1–5). The same act may be right or wrong depending on whether the gospel is at stake.

Beware of False Asceticism and Legalism:

Under the new covenant, those who elevate celibacy, food laws, or minor externals as spiritual necessities distort true piety. Scripture warns against turning indifferent things into moral absolutes.

Moral Law Remains Fixed Despite Ceremonial Flexibility:

Romans 14 allows differing views on days, but never permits altering moral norms. Sabbath observance may change in form, but Scripture never relaxes prohibitions on things like homosexual practice.

Moral “Trajectories” End Within Scripture:

Ethical development occurs *within* biblical revelation (e.g., slavery, women's roles) but must not extend beyond it. Post-biblical “progress” that contradicts Scripture undermines divine authority.

The Aim Is Holiness, Not Permission:

The goal in matters of indifferent things is not finding what we can “get away with” but discerning what glorifies God, sanctifies believers, adorns the gospel, and flows from love, joy, peace, and cross-shaped discipleship.

The Baptist Faith and Message 2000, XVII. Religious Liberty

God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it. Church and state should be separate. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others. Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.

¹³ Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother. ¹⁴ I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. ¹⁵ For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died. ¹⁶ So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil.

¹⁷ For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸ Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. ¹⁹ So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.

²⁰ Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats. ²¹ It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble. ²² The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves. ²³ But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.

I. Introduction

Christian freedom is a gift of grace, but love governs its use. The strong must not use liberty in ways that wound the weak. God's kingdom is not about eating and drinking, but about righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Faith works through love, and whatever is not from faith is sin.

II. Exposition and Reflection

1. Do Not Cause a Brother to Stumble (vv. 13–15)

- Do not put a stumbling block in another believer's path. Christian maturity expresses itself not in flaunting liberty but in protecting others from harm.
- Love limits freedom for the sake of another's conscience. True freedom is not doing whatever we please, but gladly restraining ourselves for the sake of another's spiritual good.
- The cross sets the pattern: Christ gave up His rights to serve the weak.
- A careless use of liberty, in entertainment or personal preferences, can wound another's faith or dull their sensitivity to sin.

- **Application:** Ask, *Where might my liberty tempt another toward sin?* Are there areas where I need to step back, not because I must, but because love compels me?
 - **Reflect:** Does my life show self-centered freedom or Christ-centered love?
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2. Pursue What Makes for Peace (vv. 16–19)

- Don't let your good be spoken of as evil. Guard your testimony and the reputation of the gospel in how you exercise your freedoms.
 - The kingdom's essence is not in externals (food, drink, or preferences) but in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. God's reign shows itself not through personal liberty, but through Spirit-produced fruit.
 - Build up rather than destroy the work of God. It's easy to tear down what God is doing in another's life by demanding conformity to our convictions.
 - Peace doesn't mean compromise, it means choosing edification over ego.
 - **Application:** In a world divided over countless secondary issues, what does it look like for our church family to embody peace and mutual upbuilding?
 - **Reflect:** Are my words, posts, and habits promoting peace or provoking division among believers?
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3. Act in Faith, Not Doubt (vv. 20–23)

- Keep your convictions before God. Conscience is a matter between the believer and the Lord; it's not a contest of who is "more spiritual."
 - Whatever is not from faith is sin. Acting against conscience, even if the act itself is morally neutral, betrays a heart not resting in trust before God.
 - Faith guides moral decision-making in gray areas. The question isn't merely "Is it allowed?" but "Can I do this in full confidence before the Lord?"
 - The strong must not pressure the weak, and the weak must not judge the strong; both must walk by faith, trusting God to guide and sanctify each.
 - **Application:** Before acting, ask: *Can I thank God for this? Can I do it in confidence that it honors Him?*
 - **Reflect:** How would our church culture change if every decision you made, public or private, was measured by faith rather than by comparison?
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Andy Naselli and J. D. Crowley, *How to Disagree with Other Christians*

The consciences of Christians are remarkably similar, since we all have the same Word and the same Spirit. But on the edges of conscience, God has always allowed Christians a surprising degree of latitude in personal scruples. Paul didn't command the stricter Christians of Romans 14 to get with the program and start eating meat as Jesus allowed. Nor did he command the meat-eaters to end their carnivorous ways on the outside chance they might upset the vegetarians. He expected them to get along until Jesus returned. (We use weak and strong in reference to the faith or the confidence of one's conscience to engage in a particular activity, not in reference to the strength or the weakness of one's saving faith.)

But human nature being what it is, the stricter group was always tempted to judge those they saw as too free ("And they call themselves Christians!"), while the free group tended to look down on those with unnecessary restrictions ("those poor legalists!"). Fortunately, Paul condemned both attitudes.

But disunity isn't the only danger. Arrogance and overconfidence among the strong made them ripe for a kind of sin-all-you-want heresy called antinomianism. Meanwhile, the judgmentalism of the stricter believers tended to push them into the legalistic heresy of the Judaizers.

None of these four attitudes on conscience disagreements pleased God; in fact, two of them were outright heretical:

STRONG CONSCIENCE	STRONG CONSCIENCE	WEAK CONSCIENCE	WEAK CONSCIENCE
but carelessly crossing the line into lawlessness and immorality	but looking down on (despising) those with a weak conscience	but judging those with a strong conscience	but crossing the line into legalism
eats meat	eats meat	doesn't eat meat	doesn't eat meat
"I have freedom not only to eat meat but to go to parties at idol temples." (cf. 1 Cor. 10:20–22)	"I have freedom to eat meat, and those who don't are being unreasonable and are theologically in error."	"It's sinful to eat meat, and Christians who do so are being unfaithful to God."	"You must follow the Old Testament dietary restrictions if you want to be a Christian."
Heresy	Arrogance	Judgmentalism	Heresy

Satan had his axe poised to take advantage of this natural split. What would be Paul's glue to go into that gap and hold these churches together in the midst of conscience disputes? It would be the glue of Christian love as articulated in Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8–10. The chart below inserts Paul's threefold solution of love into the growing split that threatened the early churches. Take time to look carefully at Paul's solution of love that leads to unity:

STRONG CONSCIENCE	STRONG CONSCIENCE	STRONG CONSCIENCE	STRONG CONSCIENCE	WEAK CONSCIENCE	WEAK CONSCIENCE	WEAK CONSCIENCE
but carelessly crossing the line into lawlessness and immorality	but looking down on those with a weaker conscience	fully persuaded, yet welcoming rather than looking down on those with a weaker conscience	but free to be flexible in disputable matters in order to (1) edify fellow believers and (2) advance the gospel	fully persuaded, yet welcoming rather than judging those with a stronger conscience	but judging those with a stronger conscience	but crossing the line into legalism
eats meat	eats meat	eats meat	flexible	doesn't eat meat	doesn't eat meat	doesn't eat meat
"I have freedom not only to eat meat but to go to parties at idol temples." (cf. 1 Cor. 10:20-22)	"I have freedom to eat meat, and those who don't are being unreasonable and are in theological error."	"I have freedom to eat meat for the glory of God, but I still welcome Christians who disagree."	"I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some." (1 Cor. 9:22b) (The goal of every believer)	I abstain from eating meat for the glory of God, but I still welcome Christians who disagree."	"It's sinful to eat meat, and Christians who do so are being unfaithful to God."	"You must follow the Old Testament dietary restrictions if you want to be a Christian."
HERESY	ARROGANCE	LOVE	LOVE	LOVE	JUDG-MENTALISM	HERESY
Distorts the gospel by lawless subtraction	Diminishes the gospel	Reveals the gospel	Magnifies the gospel	Reveals the gospel	Diminishes the gospel	Distorts the gospel by legalistic addition

The three center columns are derived mainly from Paul's brilliant, Spirit-inspired analysis of conscience disagreements in Romans 14 and 15. In these two chapters, Paul offers 12 principles to ensure the strict consciences of the weak would be respected, while still allowing for the legitimate freedoms of the strong.

15 We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. ² Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. ³ For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, “The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.” ⁴ For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. ⁵ May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, ⁶ that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁷ Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

I. Introduction

Those who are strong bear with the failings of the weak, for this is the way of Christ. He did not please Himself but bore reproach for others. The Spirit is forming in us the endurance, encouragement, and hope that flow from Jesus. Unity in worship arises when believers live in mutual acceptance, mirroring the harmony of Father and Son.

II. Exposition and Reflection

1. Bear with the Weak (vv. 1–2)

- Strength expresses itself through service, encouragement, and patience, not through asserting superiority or judgment over others.
- Pleasing your neighbor builds him up and seeks his good, focusing on his growth rather than your personal preferences.
- Mature believers should look beyond personal freedom to consider how their actions impact the faith of others.
- **Application:** Ask yourself how you can use your maturity to serve rather than dominate. Are there areas in your life where love leads to restraint for the sake of others?
- **Reflect:** In what ways would your relationships improve if you consistently prioritized building others up rather than asserting your own liberty?

2. Christ’s Example of Self-Denial (vv. 3–4)

- Christ endured insult, rejection, and suffering to redeem us.

- Scripture provides encouragement and examples to equip believers to endure in love, even when it is difficult or inconvenient.
- Following Christ's pattern requires humility, a willingness to set aside personal preferences, and reliance on the Spirit for strength and guidance.
- **Application:** How does Scripture anchor your love for difficult believers? What passages remind you to bear with others as Christ bears with you?
- **Reflect:** How does seeing Christ's sacrificial love shape your patience and willingness to serve weaker believers?

3. Unity for the Glory of God (vv. 5–7)

- God grants endurance, encouragement, and harmony so that believers may live together in unity.
- Welcoming one another as Christ welcomed you demonstrates God's grace and reflects His glory in the church.
- Unity requires both humility and intentional effort, recognizing that God uses diverse gifts, experiences, and convictions for the good of the body.
- **Application:** How can you intentionally welcome and encourage others this week? Are there people you need to reconcile with to promote harmony?
- **Reflect:** How does welcoming others, especially those who are different from you, display God's glory? How would our church culture change if every action were measured by love rather than personal preference?

Andy Naselli and J. D. Crowley, *How to Disagree with Other Christians*

1. Welcome Those Who Disagree with You

As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. By now you've probably already put yourself into a "strong conscience" or "weak conscience" box. In most issues, you're probably both weak and strong compared to others. There are almost always people to your left and right on any disputable matter. God may call you to obey Paul's exhortations both to the weak and to the strong.

2. Those Who Have Freedom of Conscience Must Not Look Down on Those Who Don't

Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? Isn't this always the temptation of

the strong, to look down on the strict “legalists”? Paul condemns this attitude of superiority.

3. Those Whose Conscience Restricts Them Must Not Be Judgmental Toward Those Who Have Freedom

And isn't this always the temptation of those with a weaker conscience to pass judgment on those “antinomians”? Why are these attitudes so wrong? Paul gives two reasons:

- “God has welcomed him.” Are you holier than God?
- “Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another?” You are not the master of other believers.

We're not saying these third-level issues are unimportant. It's okay to discuss them, preach about them, or even write online, but with the right spirit and proportion.

4. Each Believer Must Be Fully Convinced of Their Position in Their Own Conscience

One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. God is the only Lord of conscience. The second principle is to obey it! God didn't give you a conscience to disobey it.

This doesn't mean your conscience is always right. It's wise to calibrate it to God's will. But you cannot keep sinning against your conscience and remain healthy in faith. Live consistently by your present convictions until God leads you to adjust them.

No two believers have exactly the same conscience. That's why we need Romans 14. But no Christian's conscience matches God's standards completely. Respect the consciences of others and never compel someone to sin against their conscience.

5. Assume That Others Are Partaking or Refraining for the Glory of God

The one who observes the day does so in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord. Paul assumes both sides are acting for God's glory. Imagine a church where everyone gives each other the benefit of the doubt instead of assuming the worst.

6. Do Not Judge Each Other in These Matters

Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Each of us will give an account of himself to God. Considering our own accountability would reduce judgmentalism.

7. Your Freedom Is Correct, but Don't Destroy the Faith of a Weak Brother or Sister

Let us not pass judgment on one another, but decide never to put a stumbling block in the way of a brother. Strong Christians bear with the weaknesses of the weak. Only the strong have a choice in third-level matters like meat, holy days, or wine. They must use this freedom wisely, considering the consciences of others.

Paul emphasizes obeying conscience. Disobeying it can jeopardize one's eternal destiny. Christians with a strong conscience must not allow their freedom to embolden a weaker brother or sister to sin. The concern is not mere offense but spiritual harm.

8. Disagreements About Eating and Drinking Are Not Important in the Kingdom of God

The kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit. Serve Christ in a way that pursues peace and mutual upbuilding. Avoid schism over minor matters. This principle extends beyond food to other disputable issues, though first-level matters essential to Christianity are not included.

9. If You Have Freedom, Don't Flaunt It; If You Are Strict, Don't Expect Others to Be Strict Like You

Keep your faith between yourself and God. The strong should not flaunt freedom in ways that cause others to sin. The weak should not police others by imposing strict standards.

10. A Person Who Lives According to Their Conscience Is Blessed

Blessed is the one who has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves. But those with doubts are condemned if they act against conscience. Obeying conscience increases joy and spiritual health.

11. Follow Christ's Example, Who Put Others First

The strong must bear with the failings of the weak, not seeking only self-pleasure. To "bear with" the weak means gladly helping them by refraining from anything that would hurt their faith. Christ, though free, gave up His rights to save us. Compared to Christ's suffering, giving up a minor freedom is small.

12. We Bring Glory to God When We Welcome One Another as Christ Has Welcomed Us

Welcome one another as Christ welcomed you, for the glory of God. How you treat those who disagree on disputable matters glorifies God.

⁸ For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, ⁹ and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written,

“Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles,
and sing to your name.”

¹⁰ And again it is said,

“Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.”

¹¹ And again,

“Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles,
and let all the peoples extol him.”

¹² And again Isaiah says,

“The root of Jesse will come,
even he who arises to rule the Gentiles;
in him will the Gentiles hope.”

¹³ May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

I. Introduction

Christ came as a servant to the circumcised to confirm God's promises to Israel and to extend mercy to the Gentiles. The gospel unites the nations in one chorus of praise. The hope rooted in God's covenant faithfulness now fills the church with joy and peace through the Holy Spirit.

II. Exposition and Reflection

1. Christ Fulfills God's Promise to the Gentiles (vv. 8–9)

- Christ came to confirm God's promises and to bring salvation not only to Israel but also to the Gentiles.
- His ministry demonstrates that God's plan includes all who believe, showing both faithfulness and mercy.
- God's acceptance of the Gentiles reminds us that His purposes often exceed our expectations and preconceived notions.

- **Application:** How can you celebrate and serve those in your church or community who are different from you culturally or socially?
- **Reflect:** How does remembering God’s inclusion of all believers inspire humility and gratitude in your relationships with others?

2. Praise and Glory to God Through Unity (vv. 10–12)

- Scripture calls for praise and rejoicing when dissimilar believers live in harmony with one another.
- Unity among God’s people reflects His glory and fulfills His promises of hope and blessing to the nations.
- God desires that His people, regardless of background, come together in mutual fellowship and worship.
- **Application:** Look for opportunities to affirm and celebrate the faith of others in your congregation. How can your words and actions encourage unity and thanksgiving?
- **Reflect:** How does seeking harmony and mutual encouragement among believers glorify God in your local church?

3. Hope and Confidence in God’s Promises (v. 13)

- God is the source of hope, filling believers with joy and peace.
- True unity and encouragement are rooted in the Spirit, who strengthens love and produces perseverance in the saints.
- Believers are called to abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit, sustaining faith and love even in difficult circumstances.
- **Application:** Before facing challenges in relationships, ask: Am I relying on God to fill me with hope, joy, and peace?
- **Reflect:** How can asking God for hope and strength transform the way you interact with others in your home, community, and church?

John Piper, *Six Steps Toward Abundant Hope*

Romans 15:13 says, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.” From this verse, we can see six steps toward abundant hope for every believer.

1. The God of Hope

Everything begins with God. If there is no God, there is no hope. The source of all

hope is the God of hope, who fills His people with joy and peace. Hope begins with Him and rests entirely on Him.

2. The Word of God

Though not explicit in the verse, it is implied in the phrase “in believing.”

Believing rests on what God has spoken. All of His promises in Scripture are “yes” in Christ Jesus. Faith receives these promises, trusting in the truth and reliability of God’s Word. By believing God’s Word, the heart is anchored in reality, beauty, truth, satisfaction, and glory as revealed in Christ.

3. The Spirit of God

The verse continues, “so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.” Hope is not something we produce ourselves. The Spirit is the one who quickens the heart and produces hope in a life that was once dead to God. The Spirit opens the eyes to see the Word of God as real and powerful, enabling joy and peace to take root. It is through the Spirit’s work that the believer experiences the miracle of hope, even in a world filled with sin and death.

4. Faith in God

The connection between the Spirit’s power and the believer’s joy and peace is faith. The verse emphasizes “in believing.” Faith links God’s promises and the Spirit’s work to our hearts. It is through believing God’s promises—trusting that they are true, reliable, and sufficient—that the believer experiences joy, peace, and hope. Faith is not a vague feeling but an active reliance on the Word of God, continually resting in His promises.

5. Joy and Peace

Paul prays that God would fill His people with “all joy and peace in believing.” Joy and peace are the central experiences of hope. They flow from trusting God’s promises and are sustained by the Spirit’s power. Joy and peace are not dependent on circumstances but are cultivated through faith, rooted in the knowledge of God’s faithfulness, goodness, and sovereignty. They are the marks of a life anchored in hope.

6. Abundant Hope

Finally, the verse prays that believers “may abound in hope.” Hope is both the beginning and the culmination of the Christian life. It is dynamic, never static—sometimes waxing, sometimes waning—but it always grows and abounds by the Spirit’s power. Hope arises out of joy and peace in believing and reaches forward to the promises of God, assuring the believer of forgiveness, life, and eternal happiness in Christ. Abundant hope is a continual experience, a hope that deepens and strengthens over the course of a believer’s life.

John MacArthur, *Rejoicing with One Another in the Plan of God*

And Paul closes with a benedictory intercession. And I always feel like I'm treading on sacred ground when I try to explain a benediction. All you need to do is read it. "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing that you may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit." That really is the summation of the whole epistle. It's a benediction to wrap up everything. And it's a prayer. The God of hope, the God who is the source of eternal hope, the source of eternal life, the source of eternal salvation, fill you up, leaving nothing out. Literally overflow you with joy and peace that comes in believing, that you may super abound in hope through the agency of the power of the Spirit of God. In other words, that's another way of saying, may you get all there is to get and may you know all the joy and all the peace and all the hope that can possibly be given to you through believing in Christ by the power of the Spirit of God.

You know what that's calling for? You know what his benediction really is? May you be totally spiritually satisfied. May you be totally spiritually satisfied, filled with joy and filled with peace and filled with hope to overflowing. That's what salvation was intended to bring. It's a prayer for a satisfied soul which is to sweep back through the whole epistle, may you know forgiveness, may you know peace, may you know hope, may you know love, may you know victory over sin, may you know the power of the Spirit of God, may you know the obedience of a spiritual life, may you know the use of your spiritual gift, may you know a right relationship to people, a right relationship to government, may you know the love, may you know the sense of urgency, may you know how to care for each other as weak and strong, may you know all that God could possibly overflow to you in the power of the Spirit and thus be a fully satisfied believer. His prayer, his benediction is that we might be fully satisfied in Christ.

Thomas Ken, *Doxology*

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;

Praise Him, all creatures here below;

Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host;

Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Amen.