

## **Life aboard the Fellowship**

### **Admonish One Another**

**Romans 15:14-15**

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**Introduction to Text:** We are in a series of messages entitled “Life aboard the Fellowship” in Romans 15. There are 8 imperatives (as I see it) that we are given in Romans 15—actions that we are to pursue in our relationships with one another (especially relationships in the context of the local church). The first action is given to us in verse 1. We are to “Bear with one Another when there is a difference of opinion over things not specifically covered in Scripture. The second action that we talked about is in verses 2-4 and deals with the idea of “Pleasing One Another.” We encounter the third action in verses 5 and 6, which is the idea of “Agreeing with one another.” The fourth action is that we “Accept one another.” Last time we talked about “Serving one Another.” That brings us to our primary text today—a couple of verses that we skipped last week.

**Text:** <sup>14</sup> Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. <sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on *some* points, as reminding you, because of the grace given to me by God,

**Introduction:** Everybody is different, I suppose, but for me, I just as soon do most anything than “admonish” someone. Admonishing someone that you are supposed to admonish is not always fun, (children, co-workers), but what about those people that you do not want to confront? In this thing called fellowship, as Paul described it here in Romans, we are called, at least by implication, to admonish one another.

Though difficult and sometimes bringing disastrous results, admonishing one another in a Christ-like spirit may be the exact discipline needed to keep someone going wildly astray. I remember such a time in my life. As I applied to college back over 20 years ago, I asked my Senior English teacher to write my teacher recommendation letter needed for my application. To be quite honest, this particular teacher was not my favorite teacher and I by no means was her favorite or best student. My reasoning was simple: An English teacher ought to be able to write the best letter. She was supposed to seal the letter in an envelope, but she insisted that I read it. In the beginning she said some obligatory nice things about me as a student. However, she concluded her letter in the most honest of ways. She wrote: “The negative about Steve is that he has not reached his potential because he has yet to decide to fully apply himself in his academics.” (Not exactly the kind of thing College admission officers is looking for.) As I read her letter, I knew she was right. My mind raced to all of those occasions in her class that I had done just enough. I had not studied for the mid-term exam. A mid-term she made me retake by the way. I had participated in a joint endeavor of most every boy in the class to turn in a paper with the exact number of words required—not one word more. I had jointly orchestrated the whole class being tardy for her class one day just to see if she would give everyone a tardy if the whole class was tardy. She would. So, when I read her letter, I had no doubt that she was right. Such is the case when admonishment is right.

In Romans 15:14-15, Paul transitions from the body of his letter to the giving of his future travel plans. In this transition, this subject of admonishing one another contributes to our understanding of what it means to be in fellowship with one another in the context of belonging together to Christ. Though not

easy, we have a responsibility to admonish one another. However, before we rush out to tell everyone what is wrong with them, we better pause to understand that this is not simple pursuit. Admonishing one another is sensitive stuff.

In these two verses, Paul gives evidence of both accepting the responsibility to admonish one another (verse 14) and the ability to receive admonishment from someone. (15) Living in fellowship with others requires that we are able to do both.

### ***Armed to Admonish***

You better not try to admonish someone without being armed to do so. I see four truths in verse 14 and 15 that will help us to both give and receive admonishment.

1. Relationship—This much is obvious in the book of Romans. Paul loves these people. Paul has a relationship with them. Paul's love for the Gentile believers is as great as for the Jewish believers, and we sense that the congregation feels the same way toward Paul. The same word for admonish is used seven other times in the New Testament. One of those instances is in Acts 20:31. Paul is addressing the congregation in his farewell address to Ephesus. He says that night and day for three years he admonished them *with tears*. (Emphasis mine) In these tears, I see Paul's relationship.

The point is clear. If you are going to admonish or be admonished, that is going to happen best in the context of a personal relationship. I read this week that the average American father spends about 17 minutes a day with his children in meaningful contact. Of these 17 minutes, 13 minutes are given to discipline. And then we wonder why children will not listen! Correction in the absence of relationship is going to lead to rebellion.

2. Goodness—The first thing that Paul mentions in verse 14 is that he knows that they are filled with goodness. If you want to be received, you must be filled with goodness. In Colossians 1:28, we read, "Him we preach, warning (same word as admonish in Romans 15) every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

This must be our goal. This is a good goal. If this is our purpose in admonition, we are headed in the right direction.

Then, notice 2 Thessalonians 3:15. "Yet do not count *him* as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother."

3. The Bible—Where do we get the basis for our admonition? It must be rooted in Scripture. Colossians 3:16 says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." If you are thinking about admonishing someone you better be dwelling in the word of God. You better be not only filled with goodness, but also filled with knowledge.
4. The Call of God—The final thing is the call of God. That is, you better be certain God has called you to admonish.

Then, there seems to be the matter of a special calling that God uses to admonish. Paul indicates that calling on his life by the grace of God. Notice this Scripture.

1 Thessalonians 5:12

<sup>12</sup> And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you,

I don't remember anything else I learned specifically in Senior English, but I remember a teacher's admonition in a most subtle way. I am thankful for that admonition and had the opportunity to tell her so not all that long ago.

God referred often to Israel being "stiff-necked." This description is a good analogy to our pride problem that keeps us from being all God wants us to be. When confronted with admonishment, may we be humble and not stiff-necked and recognize any correction that we might need.