

## **15:4 *The Scriptures Encourage Hope***

### **For Our Instruction.**

Origen: This is similar to what Paul says elsewhere: “these things were written down for our instruction.”  
22 ... “Encouragement of the Scriptures” is given not to those who neither believe nor understand them  
but only to those who do. Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans.<sup>23</sup>

### **The Scriptures Enable Hope and Patience.**

Chrysostom: These things were written so that we might not fall away, for we have many battles to fight,  
both inward and outward. But being comforted by the Scriptures we can exhibit patience, so that by living  
in patience we might dwell in hope. For these things produce one another—hope brings forth patience,  
and patience, hope. Homilies on Romans 27.<sup>24</sup>

## **15:5 *Living in Harmony***

### **Live in Harmony.**

Origen: Here Paul is blessing the Romans in the manner of the patriarchs and prophets.... It is a great  
blessing that they should all understand and think alike. If you want to know just how great it is, look at  
what the Savior said in the Gospel: “If two or three of you agree, whatever they ask will be done for them  
by God.”<sup>26</sup> ...

This unanimity must be “in accord with Christ Jesus,” for of course it is possible to conspire together for  
evil. Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans.<sup>27</sup>

### **In Accord with Christ.**

Chrysostom: Love wants us to think of one another as we think of Christ. And to show that it is not mere  
love that he requires Paul adds, as always: “in accord with Christ Jesus.” Homilies on Romans 27.<sup>30</sup>

## **15:6 *Glorifying God with One Voice***

### **The Whole Body United.**

Chrysostom: He wants us to do this not just with one mouth but with one mind also. The whole body is  
united into one, and Paul concludes his address with another doxology, in which he gives the utmost  
encouragement to unanimity and concord. Homilies on Romans 27.<sup>34</sup>

## **15:7 Welcoming One Another**

### **Bind Yourselves to One Another.**

Chrysostom: Let us obey this command and bind ourselves closely to one another. For it is no longer just the weak that he is encouraging, but everyone. If someone wants to break relations with you, do not do the same with him.... Rather, display even more love toward him, that you may draw him to you. For he is a member of the body, and when a member is cut off we must do everything we can to unite it again and then pay more attention to it. Homilies on Romans 27.<sup>36</sup>

### **United in Love.**

Cyril of Alexandria: We are all one body and members one of another.<sup>40</sup> Christ obliges us to be united with one another in the bonds of charity. Explanation of the Letter to the Romans.<sup>41</sup>

## **15:8 Confirming the Promises to the Patriarchs**

### **Identifying with and Transcending Circumcision.**

Origen: There are two ways in which “Christ became a servant to the circumcised.” First, he was himself circumcised and so identified himself with them. <sup>42</sup> Second, he fulfilled the promises of the law, so that now neither those who are circumcised nor Gentile believers are obliged to keep it any more. Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans.<sup>43</sup>

### **To Confirm the Promises to the Patriarchs.**

Chrysostom: When Paul says that “Christ became a servant to the circumcised” he means that by coming to fulfill the law, by being circumcised and born of the seed of Abraham, Christ undid the curse, held back God’s wrath and made those who were meant to obtain the promises fit to receive them. <sup>44</sup> ... It was because you had transgressed the law that Christ came to fulfill it, not so that you might then keep it but so that he might confirm to you the promises which were made to the fathers, which the law had caused to be suspended because you offended and were unworthy of the promise. Homilies on Romans 28.<sup>45</sup>

### **The Word Spoken First to Israel.**

Augustine: Paul said this so that the Gentiles would understand that the Lord Christ had been sent to the Jews and so they would not be proud. Since the Jews rejected what had been sent to them, it happened that the gospel was also preached to the Gentiles, as is most clearly written in the Acts of the apostles, when the apostles say to the Jews: “It was necessary that the Word of God should be spoken first to you. Since you ... judge yourselves unworthy ... behold, we turn to the Gentiles.”<sup>46</sup>

It also agrees with the Lord’s own testimony, when he said: “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” <sup>47</sup> and: “It is not right for the children’s bread to be thrown to the dogs.” <sup>48</sup> If the Gentiles think

carefully, they will realize by their own faith, by which they now believe that to the pure all things are pure, that they should not offend those Jewish converts who, perhaps from weakness, dare not touch certain kinds of meat, fearing that it has been in contact with idols. Augustine on Romans 82.49

### **15:9 *The Gentiles Glorify God***

#### **Glorify God by Manifesting Unity.**

Chrysostom: It was by mercy alone that the Gentiles were saved; hence they were bound to glorify God. It is a glory to God when they are blended together and united, when they offer praise with one mind, when they bear the weaker and when they do not neglect the member who has been cut off. Homilies on Romans 28.53

### **15:10 *Gentiles Rejoice with Jews***

#### **Gentiles Called to Rejoice with Jews.**

Chrysostom: Paul has given this and the following Scriptures in order to show that we ought to be united and glorify God. He wanted to humble the Jews, that they might not lift themselves up over the Gentiles, given that all the prophets called them. He also wanted to humble the Gentiles, by showing them that they had a greater grace to be thankful for. Homilies on Romans 28.55

### **15:11 *Gentiles Praise God***

### **15:12 *Gentiles Hope in Christ***

### **15:13 *Abounding in Hope***

#### **All Joy and Peace.**

Origen: Precisely how all this can be fulfilled so that they may be filled with all joy and peace is hard to say, especially since the apostle himself, when talking about the gifts of the Spirit, says that he knows in part and prophesies in part.<sup>64</sup> But I think that believers can have the fullness of peace when they are reconciled to God the Father by faith.... For if someone who believes is armed with the power of the Holy Spirit, it is certain that he will always have the fullness of joy and peace. Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans.<sup>65</sup>

#### **In Believing.**

Chrysostom: In other words, may you get rid of your heartlessness toward one another and not be cast down by temptations. You will achieve this by abounding in hope, which is the cause of all good things

and comes from the Holy Spirit. It is not just from the Spirit, though, because you must do your part also. That is why Paul adds the words “in believing.” Homilies on Romans 28.<sup>66</sup>

### **15:14 Paul Encourages His Readers**

#### **The Relativity of Human Goodness.**

Origen: This fullness is relative. Paul and those like him are full of goodness, etc., in comparison with their fellow believers, but naturally they are still vastly inferior to the perfection of God. Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Satisfied About You, My Brethren.**

Chrysostom: This applies to the exhortation just given [in the preceding verses]. It is as if Paul was saying: “It was not that you were cruel or haters of your brethren that I gave you that exhortation to receive and not to neglect or destroy the work of God. For I am aware that you are full of goodness.” Homilies on Romans 28.<sup>3</sup>

### **15:15 A Reminder**

#### **Written Boldly.**

Chrysostom: Note how humble and how wise Paul is. He cut deep in the first part of his discourse, and after obtaining what he wished, now he turns to kindness. Even without the rest of what he said, his confession of boldness would be enough to calm their anger.... He often does this in his epistles, <sup>6</sup> but here even more than usual. For the Romans were of a higher rank than the others, and Paul had to bring them down to size. Homilies on Romans 29.<sup>7</sup>

### **15:16 In Service of the Gospel**

Justin Martyr: We are the true high priestly people of God ... for everywhere among the Gentiles well-pleasing and pure sacrifices are presented to God. Dialogue with Trypho 116.<sup>11</sup>

#### **In the Priestly Service of the Gospel.**

Origen: The priests had to make sure when they offered sacrifices that there were no blemishes on the sacrificial victim nor faults of any kind, so that the sacrifice might be acceptable and pleasing to God. <sup>12</sup> So also the one who makes a sacrifice of the gospel and preaches the Word of God must ensure that there is no blemish in his preaching, nor fault in his teaching, which might make him blameworthy at the judgment. <sup>13</sup> Rather, he ought first of all to sacrifice himself, to strangle his own faults and to put to death the sins in his members, so that not only by his teaching but also by the example of his life he may make his sacrifice, which is the salvation of his disciples, acceptable to God. The Holy Spirit is the source of

sanctification, and therefore the offering of the Gentiles which is made by Paul, in the role of priest, is said to be made acceptable to God by the Holy Spirit and not by the observance of the law. Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans.<sup>14</sup>

#### **Paul's Form of Priestly Sacrifice.**

Chrysostom: Now Paul raises his discourse to a loftier tone, speaking no longer of mere ministry only but of "priestly service" also. For Paul, his preaching and evangelizing were a priestly service. It was his form of sacrifice. Nobody would reproach a priest for desiring to offer the most perfect sacrifice possible. Paul says this both to lift up their thoughts and show them that they are a sacrifice and to explain his own part in the matter, because he was appointed to this office. My sacrificial knife, he says, is the gospel, the word of my preaching. Homilies on Romans 29.<sup>15</sup>

#### **That the Offering of the Gentiles May Be an Acceptable Sacrifice.**

Augustine: The Gentiles are offered to God as an acceptable sacrifice when they believe in Christ and are sanctified through the gospel. Augustine on Romans 83.<sup>16</sup>

### ***15:17 Paul's Work for God Proud in Christ Jesus***

Origen: To be proud of one's work for God without Christ Jesus would be like saying one has glory in God's eyes without righteousness, wisdom or truth. Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans.<sup>18</sup>

#### **My Work for God.**

Chrysostom: After humbling himself, Paul here raises the tone, so as not to become an object of contempt in the eyes of his readers. Homilies on Romans 29.<sup>20</sup>

### ***15:18 What Christ Accomplished Through Paul***

#### **The Proof of His Calling.**

Chrysostom: The miracles he performed and the obedience of the Gentiles were the proof that Paul had accomplished the purpose for which he was sent.... He does all he can to show that the whole thing was God's doing, not his own. <sup>22</sup> Homilies on Romans 29.<sup>23</sup>

### ***15:19 Signs and Wonders by the Spirit's Power***

#### **The Power of Signs and Wonders.**

Origen: Signs differ from wonders in that signs are miracles which point to some future happening, whereas wonders are just miracles. Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans.<sup>25</sup>

**As Far Round as Illyricum.**

Chrysostom: Count up all the places Paul had been—not just in the Roman Empire but beyond its frontiers as well. Phoenicia, Syria, Cilicia and Cappadocia for a start, but also the back country—Arabia, Persia and Armenia. This is why he said “as far round as Illyricum,” so that you would not only think of the direct route from Jerusalem to Illyricum but consider also all the surrounding countries as well. Homilies on Romans 29.26