



# ROMANS Part 129

Chapter 15:5-7

## Being mutually disposed to one another.



**Now may the God of endurance and consolation grant you to be mutually disposed to one another, according to Christ Jesus, 6 that, with one accord, with one mouth, you may be glorifying the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 7 Wherefore be taking one another to yourselves according as Christ also took you to Himself, for the glory of God.**

### ENDURANCE

Very sneaky, Paul. Here, the apostle tacitly admits that it takes endurance to be nice (“mutually disposed”) to other saints. You’ve got to really “suck it up” and be tough when it comes to loving other people, because not all members of the body of Christ are pleasant. “Now may the God of *endurance* grant you to be mutually disposed.” According to the dictionary, endurance is “the fact or power of enduring an unpleasant or difficult process or situation without giving way.”

I’m not mentioning any names.

What does it mean to be mutually disposed? It’s striving for the same thing. It’s not that we will all *gain* the same thing, but that we’re all striving together to be of one mind. Everyone who is lined up for a marathon is mutually disposed to the marathon. Some will run fast, some will run slow, some will walk. But all are in the same race. We are, all of us, smack dab in the middle of this race. We all have different goals. Some want to win, others want only to finish, others are competing against themselves for a personal record. Some contestants (such as those in the Boston Marathon) are thrilled simply to be running on a famous race course. Unlike in real 26.2 mile running races, we *will* all finish. So let us help one another along the way. This, itself, requires endurance.

### “MAIL’S HERE”

It’s hard for me to keep up with my correspondence. Sometimes an email or fifty will slip through the cracks. Time goes by and letters go unanswered. Almost everyone understands. Some will even say, “No need to write back, Zender. Just wanted to say hello.” Once in a while, however, someone complains. “I wrote you an email. It’s been a week. Why haven’t you written back?” The inference is that I’m rude. It requires all of my endurance

simply to field such a complaint with civility. I want to say something along the lines of, “There are hundreds of you and only one of me,” but I’ve only said that once. Not only do I need endurance to finish this race, I need and pray for the endurance to hold pleasant, substantive conversations with fellow saints while simultaneously sprinting uphill for the tape at the end of a 26.2 mile race—in the rain.

## CONSOLATION

Why does Paul suggest that only the God of endurance and *consolation* can grant mutual dispositions to body members? It is because of our constant failure? I’m thinking so. Back to my email example, it knots my stomach to think that I have somehow failed a fellow member of the body of Christ. That I have missed an opportunity to be mutually disposed to him or her, that I have failed to lean into such a precious person and to, in some way, share my life with them—my walk, my words, whatever wisdom God has given me—grieves me. I take this “mutual disposition” thing seriously, but it’s a tall order. Failure derails me. Caring for members of Christ’s body is more than “Hey, have a nice day.” It’s jumping into the trench of life



with people and letting them know that you’re there for them. It’s caring about another person’s life; wanting them to be well; letting them breathe from your own oxygen tank, if necessary.

I will continue to speak for myself; apply it to your own heart as the Lord sees fit. I have a heart for every single member of the body of Christ and, commensurately, such high expectations for myself that I cannot help but fail. When I do, it wrecks me. I’m wrecked first, then I rebel. I tell myself, “I could have done better; I could have done more.” Then I eat chocolate or smoke a cigar—out of frustration. Then the God of all consolation descends as the smoke ascends, reminding me that I am only human and that I love people and merely tolerate cigars.

And so, the endurance comes to help us do the “mutual disposition” thing, and the consolation comes every single time we fail to do it.

## JESUS COOLED IT

How are we to be mutually disposed to one another “according to Christ Jesus”? We are to look to Him as an example of how to lean toward other people and help them on. Uh-oh. The order just got taller. Looking to *Jesus*? It’s not that bad, as you will see. Maybe Jesus isn’t as tough as we think He is. Don’t let the Jesus example discourage you. More on this in a moment.

Maybe I’m taking this “mutually disposed” thing too far. Maybe it’s simply a bunch of people striving to think similar thoughts concerning Christ. But I don’t think so. I am trying but failing to lower the bar. When Paul enumerates his most pressing trials in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28, he finishes with “solicitude for the ecclesia.” I believe that he saved the toughest trial for last. Here’s what I mean—

Servants of Christ are they? (Being insane, I am speaking.) Above them am I! In weariness more exceedingly, in jails more exceedingly, in blows inordinately, in deaths often. By Jews five times I got forty save one. Thrice am I flogged with rods, once am I stoned, thrice am I shipwrecked, a night and a day have I spent in a swamp,

In journeys often, in dangers of rivers, in dangers of robbers, in dangers of my race, in dangers of the nations, in dangers in the city, in dangers in the wilderness, in dangers in the sea, in dangers among false brethren; in toil and labor, in vigils often, in famine and thirst, in fasts often, in cold and nakedness; *apart from what is outside, that which is coming upon me daily, the solicitude for all the ecclesias.*



For Paul as well as for us, this solicitude for the ecclesia requires endurance to do, and consolation at those times when we fail to do it.

Back to the example of Christ.

At the pool of Bethesda, Jesus Christ healed one man and left a hundred more crippled—a manageable ratio. He had twelve close friends, not a hundred and twelve. Yes, He did feed five thousand on the mountainside, but the twelve previously mentioned helped Him distribute the food and clean up afterward. It was handy for Him in that He did not have to either catch or cook the fish (the fish simply showed up by miraculous means, as you know), or bake the bread. Even under these extraordinary circumstances, Jesus did not provide such a lunch every day, or even once a week. He did it twice. Two times in 3 1/2 years. According to this ratio, perhaps we should check our emails or text messages only once a year. Imagine the time and emotional capital then available to us to live normal lives.

And yet I can't do it. I need you. I want you.

I had not intended to speak of modern communication. My strain may be different than yours. For you, it is probably not a matter of taking care of hundreds of people in a general way, but maybe taking care of only one person, specifically. That is, taking care of a sick friend or family member. Certainly this can be more demanding and require more endurance and consolation than a man such as myself tapping his in-box at any given moment to see three dozen emails. What is needed is not for the sick person to die or all of my correspondents to go away. I don't want either thing! What is needed is endurance and consolation. It is for this that we pray, and it is this that

we receive. For our God is the God of all endurance and consolation.

#### WITH ONE ACCORD, GLORIFYING

**“That, with one accord, with one mouth, you may be glorifying the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 15:6).**

The ultimate reason to keep encouraging one another is so that we may be glorifying God with the same voice, the same teaching, the same enthusiasm. Taking care of one another is not to be an end in itself. We care for one another so as to keep one another sane, on track, in the Word of God, so that we may properly glorify God. Emotions alone fail to glorify Him. Many emotional people, thinking that they are praising God, praise only a caricature of Him. They believe in a god who eternally tortures his enemies and who has lost control of his universe—if, indeed, he was ever in control of it. They believe in a son of god who failed at the cross; who failed to return humanity to his father; who failed to die for every sin because he left the sin of unbelief undied for—billions will “go to hell” because they didn't believe in Jesus. Would that He had died also for the sin of unbelief. And yet He did. He did for every sin, including that of unbelief. This is glorifying God and His Son.

#### GLORIFYING GOD CONTINUALLY

We in the body of Christ keep one another from doctrines of demons such as eternal torment. How could such a thing be a glorifying of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ? Our care for the immediate needs of one another, therefore, has a farther reaching purpose. It is to keep us sane, healthy and loved so that we can pay attention to the right teaching and send our voices, as one, to the real God—the One Who will reconcile the universe to Himself through Christ (Colossians 1:16-20), that He may be all in all (1 Corinthians 15:28).

#### THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST

**“Wherefore be taking one another to yourselves according as Christ also took you to Himself, for the glory of God” (Romans 15:7).**

And so I was right. This *is* about taking one another to ourselves. This is more than merely praying for someone or wishing them well. It is immersing oneself



into another's life, or into many peoples' lives; into every life of every member of the body of Christ. It is true that Paul specifically addressed the members of the Roman ecclesia in this letter. At the end of Romans, I believe that Paul names every member of that esteemed ecclesia. By my count, it's 27 people. "Be taking the other twenty-six people to yourselves. Don't let them go," Paul says. "Inquire of them. Field their concerns. Be with them."

The example is Christ, who took all of us to Himself, for the glory of God. He did this on the cross. He suffered alone there, not only for us, but for the entire world also, and for the dark spirits among the celestials. This does not require Him to email every member of the human race, or every celestial being. He died once, for the sake of all.

None of us have met Jesus Christ. But I suppose that He now does more for us than we can realize or appreciate. Shall He instruct Paul in such a way in Romans 15, concerning the ecclesia, and not follow His own teaching? May it not be coming to that! Shall He not take care of His own body? Is He not actively attending to us, now? Is He not taking us to Himself even as I write? Not letting us go? Fielding our concerns? Being with us in spirit?

## TOUGH SLEDDING

This may be the hardest thing Paul asks of us, to care for one another. None of us live to ourselves any longer.

The condition in which we find ourselves is similar to a marriage. In a marriage, a man and woman are no longer two, but one. Now here we are—in the body of Christ. It is a deep union, like a marriage. We are no longer our own. We belong, corporately, to one another. First and foremost, we belong to Christ, the head of the body.

Jesus told Israel that His yoke was light. One would think that we in the body would have it even lighter. I'm not so sure. Every day it seems as though we are hanging together by kite sting and duct tape. In fact, it is the earnest of the spirit that holds us together even now. An earnest is a pledge of the fullness. It's all we need for now.

Let us operate as best we can with what spirit we have. I will never forsake you, and you will never forsake me. Some in the body have forsaken me. It is the worst pain imaginable. I would rather be shipwrecked on Malta and take 39 lashes, five times, from the Jews, than to be forsaken by a fellow member of the body of Christ. At least the beating would be over. But the forsaking goes on and on.

Be kind to one another in the mercies of Christ. Help one another, as you can, and I will do the same for you. For the eons and beyond, we are one body.

Now may the God of endurance and consolation grant you to be mutually disposed to one another, according to Christ Jesus, as Christ also took you to Himself. —MZ