the Holy Spirit,” and, hence, anything which helps produce these is in accordance with God’s will.

Questions for reflection:

Are there issues in which we realize that something that others think is sinful really is not? On such issues so we respect the consciences of our weaker fellow Christians? Or do we somehow pressure others to go along with the freedom we enjoy thanks to our greater theological sophistication? Do we agree that all things are inherently clean? Do some things that we find distasteful produce righteousness, peace, and joy in other people’s lives?

49. Romans 15:1–2

As Paul begins to conclude his remarks on how the strong and the weak should act, he maintains his even-handedness by explicitly identifying himself with one side and then urging that side to make concessions. Thus he explicitly states that he himself is one of the strong. Yet, he then insists that it is the strong who must try to please the weak.

Of course, this conclusion continues the pattern that in the second half of Romans Paul addresses the Gentiles and asks them to accommodate conservative Jews.

Paul’s emphasis that the strong should defer to the weak reflects his conviction that the ultimate test of Christian maturity is love. The freedom that Christ gives is not for self-indulgence but charity. The strong by their theological sophistication have freed themselves from legal scruples, but this freedom must never be used to hurt others. On the contrary, precisely because
the strong realize that eating meat, drinking wine, and observing special days are in themselves unimportant, they should be happy to observe these things in order to avoid harming a weak brother or sister for whom Christ died.

Questions for reflection:

Is it usually a mistake for the leader of the congregation to identify with one side in a church dispute rather than maintain neutrality? If the leader does identify with one side, is it important to urge that side to make concessions? When should those who are more theologically mature accommodate the ignorance and neuroses of those who are not? When should the mature refuse to compromise?

50. Romans 15:3–4

For Christ also did not do as he pleased, but, just as it is written, “The insults of those who insulted you fell on me” [Psal. 69:9]. Everything that was written of old was written for our instruction, so that by endurance and the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. (15:3–4)

Paul appeals to the recognized spiritual authorities to justify his position that the strong should make concessions. Both the scriptures and the example of Jesus show that we must not do as we please but what is pleasing to others.

In keeping with the beliefs of the early church as a whole, Paul assumes that the scriptures were primarily written for Christians. Thus he insists that even though the Hebrew Scriptures (i.e., the Christian Old Testament) were written long ago, they were written for the Christians of his own era. Indeed, “everything” in the Old Testament was for the instruction of the church. The conviction that the scriptures were primarily written for Christians was a commonplace at the time. The
New Testament as a whole assumes that the Old Testament predicted in detail the life of Jesus and the origin of the church.

Jews who were not Christian also assumed that the Hebrew Scriptures were written for themselves and claimed that the prophecies of long ago were now being fulfilled in their own communities. Thus, for example, the group which produced the Dead Sea Scrolls took it for granted that the prophecies of the Old Testament pointed to later events in the history of their own sect.

Today it seems clear that the writers of the Old Testament were primarily concerned about their contemporaries, not subsequent generations. People who wrote Old Testament legislation or history or proverbs focused on the needs of their own day and took little thought for the distant future. Even the "prophets" concentrated on changing the behavior of their original audiences. When the prophets spoke about the future, it was generally the short-term future, and the predictions were that God would reward the original listeners if they chose to do good and punish them if they chose to do evil.

Nevertheless, in addressing their contemporaries the writers of the Old Testament often formulated principles which were of lasting value and so were relevant to Paul’s day and even our own. Thus, as Paul himself emphasized in 13:9, the commandments not to murder or commit adultery (Exod. 20:13–14; Deut. 5:17–18) are expressions of the fundamental commandment to love one’s neighbor (Lev. 19:18) and always remain valid. Similarly, much of the Old Testament was written to assure readers that the disasters of the time did not imply that God had forgotten his people or was unable to help them. On the contrary, God remains the savior and always gives new resources to those who trust in him. This principle also remains valid, and Paul was right to insist that the scriptures encourage us to endure and give us hope.

In addition, Christians believe that even in Old Testament times God was somehow guiding history to prepare for the coming of Jesus and that, therefore, the Old Testament to some extent looks forward to him. The Old Testament authors themselves did not know that God would become incarnate.
Still the incarnation was the culmination of the history of Israel, and God mysteriously guided that history to accomplish his will. Hence, at least in retrospect, Christians can discern in that history signs of the One who would come.

The scriptural passage that Paul cites here illustrates how the Old Testament points to Jesus. The quote, “the insults of those who insulted you fell on me” is from Psalm 69:9. In this psalm a blameless person is suffering from brutal persecution. He points out that it was loyalty to God that led to this suffering. Yet, God has not saved him. The author struggles against the fear that God has abandoned him. Nevertheless he concludes that because of God’s unchanging love, God will ultimately save him, and that in the end he will sing God’s praises. Moreover, when others see how God has saved him, they will also gain new trust in God. The New Testament often refers to this Psalm (e.g., John 19:29; cf. Ps. 69:21) and applies it to Jesus. Jesus was the supreme embodiment of the blameless person who suffered brutal persecution out of loyalty to God. God did not save Jesus from the cross. Yet, Jesus trusted that because of God’s unchanging love, God would ultimately vindicate him, and, in the end God did raise him from the dead. This act in turn gives others ultimate confidence in God. Hence, Jesus supremely fulfills the vision of the psalm, and in retrospect, Christians can see that it points to him. Of course, Paul suggests here in Romans that since Jesus is the model for Christians, we must also suffer reproach for our loyalty to God. Hence, the psalm even applies to us.

Questions for reflection:

What role should the authority of scripture and the example of Jesus play in resolving church disagreements? In what ways does Jesus fulfill the Old Testament? In what ways does Jesus go beyond the Old Testament or even call its basic point of view into question?
51. Romans 15:5–6

May the God of endurance and encouragement grant to you to be in harmony with one another, as Christ Jesus would wish, so that with a common mind you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (15:5–6)

Paul gives a concluding benediction, which is a clear indication that this section of the letter is now over. As we saw, at 12:1 Paul begins giving extended practical advice about how the Romans should behave. This advice climaxes in the long discussion about how the “weak” and the “strong” should live together. The benediction signals that this discussion has ended.

In the benediction Paul assumes that a “common mind”—like all blessings—is a gift from God. Despite that fact that Paul has appealed to the weak and the strong for more than a chapter to live together in peace, he realizes that finally everything depends on God’s grace. Of course, his readers need to be open to that grace. Nevertheless, God himself must grant them the possibility of living in harmony.

Paul concludes, as we might expect, by emphasizing the importance of praising God. The Jews and Gentiles in the Roman church need to be one in order that together they may glorify the Father of Jesus.

Consequently, the next few verses are not the conclusion of this particular section, but the conclusion of the argument of the entire letter. To be sure, these verses will continue the themes and even the language of what has immediately preceded, but, as we shall see, they will also tie the whole letter together.

Questions for reflection:

To what extent is being in harmony with one another something we achieve, and to what extent is it a gift from God? Is it normally a good idea to conclude a church discussion with a prayer or a blessing? Can such a prayer or blessing be abused? How does concluding with a prayer or
blessing put everything else in perspective? Does praising God make our problems seem different?

52. Romans 15:7–12

Therefore, welcome one another, just as Christ welcomed you for God’s glory. For I tell you Christ became a servant to the circumcised to confirm God’s truthfulness by fulfilling the promises to the Patriarchs and so the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy, just as it is written, “For this reason I will praise you among the Gentiles, and I will sing praise to you” [Psal. 18:49]. And furthermore it says, “Be glad, Gentiles, with his people” [Deut. 32:43], and further, “Praise the Lord, all Gentiles, and let all the peoples praise him” [Psal. 117:1], and further Isaiah says, “There will be a scion of Jesse, even he who is rising to rule the Gentiles; in him the Gentiles will put their hope” [Isa. 11:10]. (15:7–12)

In one sense this passage continues the material that immediately preceded it. Thus, as in 15:5–6, Paul emphasizes that the Christians at Rome must be united so they can properly praise God. Similarly, the command here to “welcome” one another picks up the command in 15:1 to “welcome” the weak, and this earlier command was the introduction to the entire section on the strong and the weak.

Nevertheless, this passage has a wider reference that suggests that Paul is now tying together the letter as a whole. In 14:1–15:6 Paul did not explicitly talk about Jews and Gentiles, but only about the “strong” and the “weak,” and he was first and foremost addressing a local problem at Rome. Now, by contrast Paul explicitly talks about Christ’s overall mission to the “circumcised” and the Gentiles. Of course, how Christ has saved the Jews and Gentiles is the focus of the entire letter.
Paul brings the argument of the letter to a conclusion by reminding his readers that they must welcome one another because Jesus saves the Jews first and also the Greeks. I have tried to show that the theme of the letter is that the gospel is for the Jew first and also for the Greek. This theme appears already in 1:16 and gives us a clear structure for the following fourteen chapters. Now in this concluding section Paul brings the theme to a final resolution by passing on a series of supporting quotations from scripture. Paul cites various passages from the Old Testament to show that God sent his Son both to confirm the promises to the Jews and to allow the Gentiles to experience mercy. Once again Paul emphasizes that the Gentiles are full members of God's holy people, and yet, somehow the Jews have priority. Whereas the Gentiles rejoice in God's unexpected mercy, the Jews rejoice that God has fulfilled his promises to them. Indeed, the climactic quotation from Isaiah 11:10 reminds us that physically Jesus was descended from Jesse (who was the father of King David, the national hero of the Jews) and by his resurrection also became ruler of the Gentiles. Here we have a deliberate echo of Paul's opening comment about Jesus in 1:3–4. There Paul also emphasized that physically Jesus was a descendant of David and became ruler of all through the resurrection. Consequently, the Gentiles are to rejoice that they have been grafted into God's people, and both Jews and Gentiles must become fully united in Christ.

We may note that Paul has an unusual solution to the perennial problem of how diverse cultures can live together. There are two usual solutions. The first is assimilation. The dominant culture "unifies" a geographic area by forcing minorities to adopt its own language, customs, and values. The second solution is pluralism within a supposed common humanity. Different groups attempt to live together in peace by claiming that the attributes that all human beings share are strong enough to allow people to accept ethnic differences. Because all human beings believe in love or because "a smile means friendship to everyone," we need not quarrel over the fact that we have divergent customs, beliefs, and values.
Paul, by contrast, seems to advocate pluralism within universal assimilation. Thus, on the one hand, Paul believes that the peoples of the earth can only truly become one if they accept a common cultural heritage, namely the religious tradition that began with Abraham and culminated in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Paul insists that every person must become an heir of Abraham and a brother or sister of Jesus. Nevertheless, since the Jews are falling away, this cultural tradition is no longer the special preserve of anyone. As we have seen, Paul claims that Jews must now be converted to Christianity through the witness of the Gentiles. Indeed, now in Christ “there is no Jew or Greek” (Gal. 3:28). Once different groups accept the religious tradition stretching from Abraham through Jesus, that common bond is strong enough to allow each culture to maintain its own traditions. Thus, Paul does not counsel Jews and Gentiles to adopt a common way of life. Instead, he recommends that both groups preserve their own customs, and insists that such diversity is not a barrier to being one because the unity of a common Christian faith is so great that no other unity is necessary.

In my opinion, the two usual solutions for how different cultures can live together have always failed. Assimilation is essentially a form of violence that deprives the weak of their heritage. Pluralism within a supposed common humanity does not in practice forge a strong enough bond to keep different cultures at peace. The fact that a smile means friendship to everyone seems to do little to prevent genocide.

By contrast, Paul’s solution of pluralism within universal assimilation has worked fairly well. One can, of course, exaggerate the extent to which different Christian ethnic groups have lived together in peace. Certainly, there have been countless wars between Christians, and many disputes within the church are primarily due to cultural cleavages. Nevertheless, it remains true that Christianity is the largest international movement and that many denominations (e.g., the Roman Catholic Church) have included an astonishing variety of ethnic groups all of whom affirm that they belong to the same faith as the others.
We may also note that the worst failures of Christianity occurred when various denominations identified Christianity with the narrow political or cultural agendas of particular nations. It was when Christians equated their faith with the special interests of Catholic Spain or Orthodox Russia or the Protestant United States that whole civilizations suffered. In practice, the Christian message ceased to be love for all and became the acceptance of cultural and political domination.

As Paul begins to conclude the argument of the letter as a whole, he is filled with praise. The contemplation of what God has done to honor his promises to the Jews and to give hope to the Gentiles moves Paul to glorify God. Accordingly, he cites scriptures that urge both Jews and Greeks to praise the Lord.

Questions for reflection:

In the history of our nation, state, or local community, what has been the price of forcing minorities to assimilate? What is the price of living with pluralism? Do we as Christians think of ourselves as belonging to a single historical community that includes all other Christians? Does a sense of our common past and our common loyalty to Jesus allow us to accept the many cultural ways in which Christians differ from one another? To what extent do we confuse Christianity with the specific cultural values that Americans hold?

53. Romans 15:13

May the God who gives hope fill you with all joy and peace through faith so that you may have abundant hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (15:13)

As a fitting close to his extended argument, Paul emphasizes that Christian must live in hope. The joy and peace that Christians are called to have do not come from ignoring
the brokenness that pervades the world and even our own lives. Earlier Paul noted that the entire creation groans and even Christians share in its suffering (8:20–25). The peace and joy that Christians are called to have comes from the faith that the God who raised Jesus from the dead has the power to redeem creation. The presence of the Holy Spirit is the beginning of that redemption and points us to the glory that is to be. By the power of the resulting hope we can rejoice despite the tribulations of the present.

Questions for reflection:

Do we as Christians often face the temptation of minimizing the problems of the world in order to affirm the peace and joy which Christianity is supposed to give? Do we face the opposite temptation of seeing the problems of the world so clearly that we despair? What would it mean for us to live in hope? How can the experience of God’s transforming presence in our own lives begin to give us hope?

54. Romans 15:14–22

I myself am confident, my brothers and sisters, about you that you yourselves are completely good, and full of all knowledge, and are able also to instruct each other. I have written rather boldly to you at some points as a reminder, because of the grace given to me by God so that I might be a minister for Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, a priest for God’s good news so that the Gentiles might be an acceptable offering, being sanctified in the Holy Spirit. I have grounds to brag in Christ Jesus concerning what I have achieved for God. For I will not presume to say anything except about what Christ has accomplished through me to make the Gentiles obey him. I have accomplished this by word and action, by the power of miraculous signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit. From Jerusalem and its environs up to
Serbia I have completed preaching the good news of Christ. I have the ambition to preach not where Christ has already been acknowledged—lest I build on a foundation laid by someone else—but, just as it is written, “Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand” [Isa. 52:15]. For this reason, I have often been prevented from coming to you. (15:14–22)

Now that Paul has essentially completed his presentation of the gospel to the Roman Christians, he diplomatically suggests that their understanding was never defective. Although he wrote boldly to them “at some points,” he was only reminding them of what they already knew.

Paul then begins to prepare for his appeal for support by emphasizing how much he has already accomplished. Naturally, Paul cannot ask for assistance before he convinces his readers that his work merits it. Consequently, Paul brags that he has preached the gospel from Jerusalem to what would now be Serbia, that he has opened new mission fields, and that he has even worked miracles.

Of course, Paul is not bragging about accomplishments that he has done by his own strength. He insists that he would not presume to boast about any such thing. Instead, he is boasting about “what Christ has accomplished through” him “by the power of the Spirit.”

From what Paul writes, it is clear that Paul’s goal was to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth as quickly as possible. To modern readers it is astonishing that Paul could claim that he has completed preaching the gospel from Jerusalem to Serbia. Obviously, he had not preached everywhere in this vast area. It is also interesting that Paul insists that he does not want to help consolidate Christian communities that other missionaries have founded. Instead, his constant desire is to expand into virgin territory and bring the gospel to new lands. In a moment he will tell the Romans that he now plans to start a mission in Spain. For Paul’s readers, Spain was the westernmost point of the known world.
Paul’s desire to bring the gospel to the ends of the earth as quickly as possible, probably reflects his faith that Christ would not return until the whole earth had had a chance to hear the good news. In the Gospel of Mark Jesus declares that the gospel must first be preached to all nations before the present order of reality can end (Mark 13:10). Paul probably knew this prophecy and took it literally. Consequently, it was urgent to bring the gospel to the end of the world as soon as possible so as not to delay the coming of final salvation.

In line with the overall theme of the letter that the gospel is for the Jews first and also for the Greeks, Paul here presents his ministry in two parts. In this opening section, he emphasizes his evangelistic work among the Gentiles and boasts about how he has gotten Pagans to obey God, and in a moment he will go on to announce his intention to preach to Pagan Spain. He will discuss his upcoming work for the Jews in Jerusalem a little later. Nevertheless, even here he carefully notes that his gospel is for the Jews first since his preaching began in Jerusalem and only subsequently went all the way to Serbia.

Paul appeals to the sensibilities of the divided congregation at Rome by calling himself both a “minister . . . to the Gentiles” and a “priest.” The Gentiles in the congregation would have appreciated Paul’s insistence that his ministry was primarily to them. By contrast, conservative Jews would have appreciated his insistence that the Gentiles needed to be sanctified and that, therefore, Paul was in effect acting as a Jewish priest.

**Questions for reflection:**

Do people generally have to boast when they are asking for financial support? Is there really a difference between boasting of what we have accomplished and boasting of what God has accomplished through us? Where does each type of boasting invite us and our hearers to focus attention? Was Paul mistaken in his belief that the gospel must reach the end of the world before final salvation could come?
But now, since I no longer have scope in these regions and since for many years I have had a desire to come to you as I go to Spain, I hope to see you as I pass through and to be helped on my way there by you when I first have enjoyed your company for a while. But now I am going to Jerusalem to aid Christians there. For Macedonia and Acaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the Christians in Jerusalem. They were pleased to do so, for they also are indebted to them. If the Gentiles share in their spiritual blessings, they also should serve them in material ones. When I have completed doing this and delivered the proceeds for them, I will go out to Spain by way of you. I know that when I come to you, I will come with the fullness of Christ’s blessing. But I beg you, brothers and sisters, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit’s love, that you struggle with me in prayers to God on my behalf that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea and that my contribution to Jerusalem may be acceptable to the Christians there, so that I may come to you in joy by God’s will and be refreshed along with you. (15:23-32)

Paul now shares his plans in detail, including his upcoming missions to Jerusalem and Spain. At the beginning of the letter Paul cautiously announced that he would be visiting Rome so that he and his readers could encourage one another. Paul, however, said nothing about going to Jerusalem and Spain. Now, by contrast, Paul announces that he is taking money from his Gentile congregations to the church in Jerusalem and then, after he has visited Rome, he plans to open a new missionary field in Spain.

The mission to Jerusalem was dangerous in the extreme. The conservative Jewish establishment in Jerusalem hated Paul. By preaching that Gentiles could join the church without submitting to the Jewish Law, Paul was proclaiming that keeping this law was no longer important—a point, of course, that Paul makes in Romans. From a Jewish perspective, however,
the Law was God's unchanging will and defined what it was to be Jewish. A Jew was someone who kept the Law. Hence, Paul was striking at the very basis of Jewish identity. Not surprisingly, non-Christian Jews in Jerusalem assumed—albeit incorrectly—that Paul was actually telling Jews outside of Palestine to forsake their ancestral customs (Acts 21:21). Hence, many Jews in Jerusalem wished to kill Paul, and, consequently, it was very risky for him to go there. When Paul did in fact go, he barely escaped with his life and ended up in prison.

Even if he survived the dangers of visiting Jerusalem, it was by no means clear that the church there would accept him, despite the fact that he was bringing money. The church could not welcome him and receive his financial support without acknowledging the validity of his message. Conservative Jewish Christians disagreed with that message, and everyone realized that accepting Paul would dangerously antagonize public opinion. Hence, it was by no means clear that even the church at Jerusalem would acknowledge him.

The church at Rome was probably in a position to press the church at Jerusalem to accept Paul. To be sure, we have no way of knowing how much influence the Roman church had in Jerusalem, but it is very likely that it had at least some. The early Christian movement was a relatively small community, and, as Paul's letters themselves make evident, people were in frequent communication. Hence, at the very least, the Roman church could have sent a letter of recommendation.

Paul's mission to Spain also posed grave difficulties, and help from the church at Rome would be most useful to him there too. Previously Paul had preached in the eastern Mediterranean where there were large Jewish communities and the dominant language was Greek. Consequently, even when Paul was founding new Christian communities, he could still count on there being people who already understood the Old Testament promises of the coming of a Messiah, and he could speak to his potential converts in a language in which he was totally fluent. By contrast, there were few Jews in Spain and few people who could speak Greek. The church at Rome was probably
the closest existing Christian community to Spain and was very large. Only a few years later when Nero began to persecute the Roman church, there was, even according to a Pagan historian, an enormous number of Christians in Rome (Tacitus, Annals, xv. 44). Many members of the Roman congregation must have been fluent in Latin as well as Greek and, therefore, could act as translators for Paul when he went to Spain. Hence, that church’s assistance would be especially valuable to his future work there.

Consequently, Paul asks for support. He begs the readers to pray for the success of his trip to Jerusalem, both that he escape from his powerful enemies in the city and that the Christian community there would receive him. Of course, by asking for prayer Paul was implicitly asking for whatever other help the Roman church might be able to give him. Paul also hints generously that the Roman church could give him logistical support as he departs for Spain. He tells his readers that he hopes that they will help him on his way there.

The fact that Paul does not share his plans in detail and ask for support until after he has explained his message reflects the fact that Paul had to win his readers’ sympathy by convincing them that his gospel was legitimate. As we have seen, many people felt that Paul was preaching libertine behavior; indeed, Paul himself states that “some” were accusing him of saying, “Let us do evil that good may result” (3:8). Many people also felt that Paul’s missionary work among the Gentiles was giving Christian Judaism a bad reputation among Jews and thus hindering the efforts of other evangelists who were trying to convert them. Hence, Paul carefully had to explain his “gospel” to skeptical readers at Rome before he could ask for their assistance in his upcoming work.

Paul again suggests that his missionary work is for the Jew first and also for the Greek, just as he has argued throughout the letter that the gospel is for the Jew first and also for the Greek. Thus, Paul tells his readers that his first upcoming mission is to take money to the Jewish Christian church in Jerusalem. After that he will journey to Spain to convert Gentiles there.
Paul’s trip to Jerusalem especially symbolized that the Gospel was for the Jews first but, of course, also for everyone. Paul had originally pledged to get Gentile Christians to send money to Jerusalem as part of a larger agreement that Peter would direct ongoing efforts to convert Jews and Paul would spearhead efforts to convert Gentiles (Gal. 2:1-10). The offering from the Gentiles was a sacramental acknowledgment of the primacy of Jewish Christianity and an expression of the unity of the church. Here in Romans Paul stresses that the Gentiles have an obligation to help the Jews in Jerusalem in material things since the Gentiles are in their spiritual debt.

Of course, by once again emphasizing that he is concerned about Jews and Gentiles, Paul is courting both sides in the divided congregation at Rome.

Because Paul asks for the Roman Christians to support him in his mission to Jerusalem, we may suspect that Paul hoped they would try to convince Christians there that Paul’s message was that the gospel was for the Jews first. By sending this letter to Rome and asking the recipients to pray for the success of his mission to Jerusalem, Paul may have been hinting that the Roman Christians might also try to “explain” Paul’s behavior to the Jerusalem community. Naturally, if they actually did so, their explanation would reflect what Paul himself says in this letter. Hence, it is not surprising that Paul emphasizes not only the unity of Jews and Gentiles in Christ, but even that the gospel is for the Jews first. That message would be most appealing to the Jewish church in Jerusalem, especially if that church was still angry over Paul’s negative statements in Galatians about such things as circumcision and the Mosaic Law. Here we may recall that Paul probably wrote Galatians only shortly before Romans, and that Galatians deals with many of the same themes as Romans but in a way that is much less supportive of Jewish Christianity.
Questions for reflection:

What does Paul mean when he asks the Roman congregation to struggle with him in prayer? Have you ever felt that through prayer you were sharing in someone’s struggle? Is such prayer especially effective? If we pray for people and with them, are we more likely to give them other kinds of support? Why?

56. Romans 15:33

May the God of peace be with all of you. Amen. (15:33)

Paul gives a blessing that reminds the Romans what his message is. The blessing stresses that God brings peace. So too, Paul wants the Romans to remember that he himself does not wish to be a cause of division and rancor but of unity and tranquility. The blessing also stresses that God’s peace is for “all.” So too, Paul wants the Romans to remember that his message is for everyone, whether Jew or Greek. As we have seen, the word “all” has played a key role in the letter as a whole.

Questions for reflection:

Must the final goal of all Christian preaching be peace? Must all Christian preaching finally be for everyone? How can we challenge specific groups to repent and reform and still convey the larger message that the Gospel is a message of peace for all?