

Romans 15:1-7

- I. You must accept one another.
 - A. The strong must accept the weak and bear their weaknesses.
 1. Paul includes himself among the strong.
 - a. Therefore the strong are not just Gentile Christians who were not concerned about foods and feast days.
 - b. Strong is dunamis (power – dynamite); without strength is adunamis – no power or strength.
 - c. Therefore, the strong are those Christians who have the power or strength to live according to the freedom they have in Christ.
 2. The strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without that power.
 - a. Ought implies a moral obligation.
 - 1) The word we translate ought means to be a debtor, to be under obligation; to be bound by duty.
 - 2) Ought means that there is a law which requires a particular behavior.
 - a) We ought to drive no faster than the posted speed limit.
 - b) We ought to stop at stop signs.
 - b. The moral obligation that is implied is the “law of love.”
 - 1) Why should we bear the weaknesses of those without power?
 - a) Because Christ bore our weaknesses.
 - b) Because we did not have the power to do what is required for salvation.
 - 2) We must not (just) please ourselves – We must regard others as more important than ourselves.
 - B. As Christians, you must follow the example of Christ.
 1. He did not please Himself.
 - a. Philippians 2:3-8: **Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.**
 - b. Christ regarded each one of us who is saved as more important than His personal comfort.
 - c. Moo: “...*occasionally abstaining from meat or wine or observing a special religious day should not seem like much of a burden in comparison with what Christ had to suffer for the sake of others.*”
 2. He took upon Himself the reproaches you and I hurled at God (verse 3).
 - a. Unbelief is sin and a reproach to God.
 - b. All sin is against God
 - c. Psalm 51:1-4: **Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, And my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, I have sinned, And done what is evil in Your sight, So that You are justified when You speak, And blameless when You judge.**

- C. You must accept one another since you have been accepted by God.
 - 1. Christ accepted us and gave His life for us.
 - 2. Christ accepted us to the glory of God.
 - 3. God has accepted your brother (Romans 14:3).
 - a. If God has accepted someone.
 - b. If God has accepted you.
 - c. How can you not accept the one whom God has accepted?

II. You must please your neighbor.

- A. Scripture is NOT saying that we should please our neighbor just to be pleasant or to eliminate controversy.
 - 1. Who is the neighbor in view in this passage?
 - a. The context indicates the neighbor is one who is in the church.
 - b. Scripture is **NOT** teaching that our behavior must be pleasing to everyone.
 - c. Even the behavior of Christ Himself did not please everyone.
 - 2. Galatians 1:8-10: **But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed. For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.**
 - a. In matters concerning the proclamation of the Gospel there must be no compromise.
 - b. We must not change the Gospel in order to please anyone.
 - 3. Ephesians 6:5-7: **Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men...**
 - a. In matters of service to others our deeds must not be done simply to please men.
 - b. Our deeds must always done in service to and to please God.
 - 4. To please unbelievers in every case would be to displease God.
- B. You must please your neighbor in the church for **THE** good.
 - 1. What did Paul mean when he says for **THE** good?
 - 2. Remember that the context of the passage is how to live in love with those in the church.
 - 3. What is being taught is that we must please our neighbor in the church so that our witness to unbelievers is a witness of love.
 - 4. They will know we are Christians by our love.
- C. You must please your neighbor in the church TO edification.
 - 1. This means that we are not to please our neighbor simply to make him feel good.
 - a. We must take the opportunity to edify or build up our brother/sister.
 - b. We must use the opportunity to teach them what Scripture says about the situation in which they are weak.
 - 2. Edification is a word which means solid or concrete as a building.
 - a. Therefore, we are to use the opportunity to build up our neighbor.
 - b. We are to make them solid in their faith.
 - c. Leon Morris:
 - 1) *“This does not mean that we are never to do anything that we want to do, but that we are never to do what pleases us regardless of its effects on others...Consideration for weaker Christians takes precedence over what we ourselves would like to do.”*
 - 2) *“A genuine concern for the weak will mean an attempt to make them strong by leading them out of their irrational scruples so that they, too, will be strong.”*

- III. You can not accept one another or bear the burdens of the weak or please one another without Christ.
- A. It is God alone who gives perseverance (patience) and encouragement.
1. Verse 5: is literally: **Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded toward one another according to Christ Jesus.**
 - a. It is God alone who is the source of **THE** patience.
 - 1) The word we translate perseverance or patience is “patient waiting” or “cheerful (hopeful) endurance.”
 - 2) Our culture is one of little patience or endurance.
 - 3) Especially in America, we want everything **NOW!**
 - 4) It is only as we have God in our lives that we can become patient.
 - b. It is God alone who is the source of **THE** consolation or endurance.
 - 1) The word we translate encouragement or consolation is paraklesis.
 - 2) It comes from the Greek Paraclete from which we get the Comforter.
 - a) The word literally means “one who comes alongside.”
 - b) It means to comfort or to encourage or to exhort or to counsel.
 - 3) You can not truly be encouraged or comforted without God in your life.
 - 4) You can not truly comfort or encourage any one else without God in your life.
 - 5) You can not truly counsel any one else unless you are counseling them from the Word of God.
 2. God grants you patience and encouragement through the Scriptures.
 - a. Verse 4 is literally; **whatever things were written before were written for our learning that through the patience and through the comfort of the Scriptures we might have the hope.**
 - 1) Note that the Scriptures Paul is referring to are the Old Testament writings
 - a) They were written for our instruction.
 - b) The word means instruction, learning, teaching, or **doctrine.**
 - 2) It is through the agency of the Old Testament Scriptures (and the New) that we gain patience and comfort that we might have the hope of salvation through Christ.
 - b. It is only through the instruction of God’s Word that He grants patient endurance and comfort and hope.
 - 1) God grants us patience and comfort through a relationship with His Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ.
 - 2) God grants us patience and comfort through His written Word which about Christ.
- B. Morris: ***“Paul is not exhorting believers to pull themselves together and manifest these qualities, but (to rejoice) in God who gives them.”***
- C. You must accept one another to the glory of God.
1. Question #1 of the Westminster Shorter Catechism asks, “What is the chief end of man?”
 2. It answers, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.”
 3. Moo: ***“Division in the church over nonessentials diverts precious time and energy from its basic mission: the proclamation of the gospel and the glorifying of God.”***
 4. Jesus Christ accepted you and I **“to the glory of God.”** (verse 7).
 5. Therefore, you and I must accept one another, just as Christ accepted us **to the glory of God.**