



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

Strong & Weak

September 27, 2020

Romans 15:1-7

Clint Pressley

15 We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. ²Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. ³For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me." ⁴For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. ⁵May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, ⁶that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁷Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

(Pastor prays)

Every church that's worth its salt is a mixture of people from different backgrounds and beginnings, different cultures and even worldviews, different life experiences and expectations. Every church is a mixture of strong and weak and on a truer level every person is a mixture of being strong and feeling weak. None of us can always feel strong and none of us actually stay forever weak. There are times when people need you to carry their burdens as you are the strong one. There are other times when you have had the wind knocked out of your soul and you need your Christian friends, brothers and sisters in Christ, to come and put an arm around you and lift the burden. And if the Church of Jesus Christ is going to stick together around the gospel, then we must bear up one another and carry the burdens of people that we might not understand or even disagree with. This passage is a gospel summons to a hurting church to get their eyes on Jesus and their hearts interested in brothers and sisters in Christ. In this passage Paul writes to a struggling bunch of believers in a Godforsaken world and gives them the hope

found at the cross of Jesus and the strength found in Christ Church. There is something wrong if the cross of Jesus doesn't give you a heart for people and a love for his church and Paul reminds his readers, and he reminds us, that there is no stronger bond than that of one Christian to another. And it's the cross centered bond that gives us hope, supplies us with strength and brings glory to God. In the words of Ray Steadman, this passage shows us that we have humble duties to fulfill and high doctrine to hold onto. And I want us to do both so that at Hickory Grove the love of God found at the cross of Jesus, saves sinners, strengthens the weak and causes us all to look with hope toward the future.

Strong Beliefs Always Lead to Real Action

We have clear directives

You will see our clear directives in verses 1-2 or what Ray Steadman called our humble duties. Let's read those verses. ***15** We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. ² Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.*

Christian Impulses. Look at verse 1, "we who are strong". Paul obviously puts himself in that category but he's not always felt like that. In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul talks about being content with weaknesses, insults and difficulties for the sake of Christ. I am weak. But here he is operating at a point of strength and with that comes an impulse. And notice that the impulse isn't to dominate or manipulate or overpower. Look at the impulse in verse 1. We who are strong have an obligation. You might say, ought" to bear with the failings of the weak. Obligation is a strong word. We owe, there is not a choice in the matter. When you are doing well and growing and not battling depression, growing in theology and prayer, your mandate is to reach out and take some of the burden off of a brother that is overwhelmed, confused, stuck or just in an emotional hole. It's the Christian impulse and Paul adds to it in verse 1. We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. If the Marines have a motto of no man left behind how much more should those who are children of grace forgo personal comfort and desires and opinions and even feelings; forgo those to go back and pick up a brother that's wounded in his soul or confused about his life or just plain tired. Paul intensifies it in verse 2. Don't please yourself, please your neighbor. And then defines what he means. For his good, build him up, point him to the hope and healing and peace and

patience of the Lord Jesus. Talk about grace, be patient and listen and go to the healing floor at the cross of Jesus. If we could just get our eyes off ourselves and on to the grace of God at the cross. Before we can be cultural warriors, we have to be Christian brothers and sisters. That means in the name of Jesus, we have some clear directives. We have obligations to bear with the failings of the weak and if you are feeling weak right now don't forget you are a child of God bought by the blood of Jesus. Receive the help and love of the church and it will get better. We have clear directives.

We have the ultimate example

Look what Paul does in verse 3. in fact, this is the only place he does this in the entire book of Romans. He holds up Jesus for us to look at and to imitate and to consider, to think on. There are things to mull over here.

Example. For Christ did not please himself. The greatest example of self-denial for the sake of others is Jesus. Paul's point seems to be, if Jesus Christ the very son of God, did not order his life to please himself, how much more should we forgo our own personal advantages and follow in the footsteps of the suffering servant. If we can't actually be the hands and feet of Jesus we can live in such a way to point people to the hands and feet of Jesus who were wounded for our transgressions and pierced through for our iniquities. Paul is calling us to consider Jesus and imitate him so that if we claim to be Christian, it's actually a true statement. So much strife and trouble and hurt and division and pain and confusion could cease if people in the church just acted Christian. Example.

Expiation. That's one of those theological terms to describe what Jesus accomplished for us on the cross. It means a blotting out of a criminal record, taking away of guilt and washing away of sin and the responsibility for it. It's one of those things Jesus did for sinners at the cross. For any sinner that repents and believes, that is what the cross is about. And Paul points us there by quote quoting Psalm 69:9 in verse 3. ³ *For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me."* That song, Psalm 69, is used multiple times in the New Testament. Jesus quotes it several times and most of the time that Psalm is used to explain the death of Jesus. So as a brother or sister, I'm asking you to consider Jesus, think of his pierced hands and wounded side and painful cries. Feel loved by God and cleansed by his blood and covered with grace and strengthened by his spirit. And never stray far from the

cross. We are people of the cross. Jesus is our example but more than that he grants expiation. Our sins, all of them, are washed away. We have clear directives. We have an ultimate example.

We Have a sure foundation

Verses 3-4 give us something to stand on. Paul gives that to us and man do we need that right now! Back in verse 3 Paul used the little phrase, "as it is written". When he talks about what is written he means the Bible and the Old Testament. And in verse 4 he explains how important the Bible is. Let's read verse four and then talk about it. *⁴For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.* Let's just list some of the qualities of the Bible.

Authoritative. In verse 3 Paul uses the phrase, "as it is written", to make his case. Paul appeals to the Bible because there is no higher or earthly authority than the Bible. Where the Bible speaks, God speaks and provides the grounds for Christians to stand on, the guidance for Christians to follow and Paul just quotes the Bible because for him the Bible ends every argument. You have authority.

Christ centered. The whole reason he quotes Psalm 69 is because it points to Christ. This is the same thing Jesus told the two disciples on the road to a mass. The Bible points to him. Paul said the same thing in second Timothy 3: 15. *¹⁵and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.* The scriptures make us wise to salvation. The Bible is not a rule book, it's an Emancipation Proclamation and the liberator is Jesus.

Comprehensive. Verse 4 says, *whatever was written in former days.* The whole thing speaks to all of life and the universal need for Christ. The Old Testament talks about promises made and the New Testament shows us promises kept. The Bible takes us from creation to the fall. It shows the consequences and the pursuit of God of us. And finally culminates in our redemption.

Instructive. Verse 4 says it's written for our instruction. It's written to teach us and you need to learn, soak it in, know it and let it seep into your soul. Most people that say they don't want a

head full of Bible knowledge have their brains filled with other junk. If it really is the word of God then it will do its work in your soul. Look what that work is.

Endurance. Verse 4 is giving you the ability to keep going. It is the staying power. It is the hanging on power. It is the slogging through power that the word of God, like a slow but unstoppable freight train, is going to carry you through. It is building stamina when you feel miserable or are bored with everything. God's word keeps rolling in your soul.

Hope. Hope is a way forward even if it's one step. Hope is a plan because that plan assures a future. Hope is Jesus and the resurrection . That's what the Bible does, gives you a foundation to stand on. You're not sinking. You're not free falling. There is a bottom and it's solid and safe and Jesus is there. We have clear directives. We have the ultimate example. We have a sure foundation.

We Have a glorious destination

Verses 5-6 are sort of a prayer and a wish and a blessing all wrapped in one that seems like a great way to end this sermon. ⁵ *May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus,* ⁶ *that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.* ⁷ *Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.* Our God is a God of endurance and encouragement in Jesus . If he's your God you are going to make it. Verse 5 is Christ centered, cross centered unity. The cross holds us together making us one body. And verse 6 goes on to say we are one voice: unified, singular and glorifying God. Our God who is the father of our Lord, Jesus, who died to atone for our sin. Christ who was a raised from the dead and intercedes for us now. This whole passage rings with hope for the weak and the strong and who are made strong in Jesus.

As we close today –

Are you weak? Come to Jesus and your church to help you carry your burden.

Are you strong? Carry the burdens of your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Are you distracted? Consider Jesus.

Are you slipping or backsliding? Get into scripture.

Are you living to glorify God through our Lord Jesus Christ?

In Jesus, the weak will again say, "I am strong." Father, may you work!

(Pastor prays)