

## EXPOSITION OF ROMANS

Message #52

Romans 15:1-6

What does the strong, mature believer owe to other believers coming up through the ranks?

**THE STRONG BELIEVER IS RESPONSIBLE TO BUILD UP THE WEAK BELIEVER SO THAT ALL BELIEVERS MAY END UP GLORIFYING GOD.**

Let us remember that the strong believer is the one who knows he has liberty in Christ when it comes to gray area issues. The weak believer, in this context, is the one who thinks his scruples concerning gray areas makes him spiritual (i.e. Rom. 14:2).

These verses are addressed to the strong believer and by use of the pronoun “we,” Paul classifies himself as one of the strong believers.

Before we examine this issue, let us observe that nowhere in these verses does God say that the strong believer must agree with the weak believer. Nowhere in these verses does it say that the strong believer should encourage the prejudices of the weak believer. **What this text says is that the strong believer is responsible to minister to the weak believer, and not only to fellow believers but even our own neighbor (Romans 15:2).**

**QUESTION #1** – What are the ministry responsibilities of the strong believer to the weak believer? **15:1-2**

There are three main responsibilities set forth in these two verses:

**Responsibility #1** - The strong believer has the responsibility to bear the weakness of the weak believer. **15:1a**

The Greek word “bear” is one that means to endure, to lift and to take away. This is more than just a toleration of the weakness; it is an attempt to help take the weakness away. The word “weakness” is a word used for one who is sick and lacks strength as in some bodily deficiency.

What Paul is saying here is that because of the weak person’s lack of true Biblical and doctrinal understanding of the “faith” system (14:1), he is deficient. It is the responsibility of the strong brother or sister to endure the nonsense and work toward lifting that deficiency. Weak people in the faith are sick and they need help, and the strong believer in the church has the responsibility to help.

Now the actual way you help lift the deficiency is by patiently enduring the weakness and by lovingly communicating the truth. This is the responsibility of the strong believer to the weak.

**Responsibility #2** - The strong believer has the responsibility not to please himself . **15:1b**

More than likely the Apostle Paul specifically had in his mind the kinds of things a strong believer has a tendency to want to do to the weak believer that really pleases himself:

1. Just let him go; 2. Get rid of him; 3. Argue with him; 4. Look down on him.

This is generally what would please the strong believer.

Paul's point is that the strong believer has the responsibility not to please himself, but rather create an environment and atmosphere in which the weak believer may be helped out of his weakness. Charles Hodge, professor of Biblical languages at Princeton Theological Seminary in the mid-1800s, said this idea is that the strong believer must not do what he has the right to do.

I want us to see an important principle here - God does not grant us freedom or liberty just so we can please ourselves. Our liberty is granted so that we may function in various contexts to reach others and to minister to others. If pleasing ourselves is our primary motive, we will have a miserable existence.

**Responsibility #3** - The strong believer has the responsibility to please his neighbor . **15:2**

I understand the conjunction "for" to introduce the purpose or reason why the strong believer is to please his neighbor; because it is the thing that is for our neighbor's good, and it is the thing that will edify him or build him up in the faith.

In other words we have the responsibility to be very careful in what we do and say before our neighbors.

**QUESTION #2** – Why must the strong believer minister to the weak believer in these ways?  
**15:3-6**

The conjunction "for" of **verse 3** introduces two simple reasons why the strong believer must be willing to minister to the weak believer in this way:

**Reason #1** - Strong believers must minister to weak because of Christ's example. **15:3-4**

If ever there were a motivational reason for trying to minister to the weak brother, it is the example of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ was the most selfless person to ever be on this earth and He was the strongest to ever be on this earth. Jesus Christ was God in the flesh and He humbled Himself to minister to others. Think about this, Christ could have demanded immediate conformity and had the power to get the conformity. Instead, He patiently ministered in a world that hated Him.

In **verse 3**, Paul quotes Psalm 69:9, a Psalm of David. David was writing that Psalm because he had been hounded by Saul and his men. The reason he was being hounded was because he had been anointed by God to a position of power. The reproaches he experienced were very real and they were due to the fact that he was in a right relationship with God.

That is the personal interpretation to that Psalm. However, Paul brings out a deep prophetic interpretation and applies it to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ came through the line of David and all of the reproaches that He suffered, He suffered because of His presentation of truth. He was the Son of God and the Truth of God and it was that which caused Him hardship in this world.

Think what it must have been like to be the Son of God and be called a drunk.

Think of what it must have been like to be the Son of God and charged with associating with prostitutes.

Think what it must have been like to be the Son of God and have people spread lies about you saying that you were satanic and doing your miracles by the power of Satan.

Think what it must have been like to have people say you were an uneducated fool.

Think what it must have been like to be the Son of God and be nailed to a cross.

Why did He put up with all this verbal nonsense and take all of this reproach from ignorant and weak people? Paul answers that question in **II Corinthians 8:9**: **“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.”**

Jesus Christ put up with all of this nonsense for weak people like us. That is why those who are strong believers must be willing to put up with the nonsense of those who are the weak believers.

Well the question now comes, where in the world do we get the strength to respond like Jesus Christ? Look carefully at **Romans 15: 4 - from the written Scriptures !**

Great development for God comes from a proper and deep understanding of Scripture.

**Reason #2** - Strong believers must minister to weak because of God's glory. **15:5-6**

**It is our responsibility to be a group of people who glorify God.** The primary emphasis here is the strong believer. That verb “grant” is a Greek verb which means to give or yield. Paul’s prayer is that God might give the Roman church the ability to glorify God. In fact, Paul specifically states three needed elements if we are to glorify God:

**(Element #1)** - The element of perseverance . **15:5a**

**(Element #2)** - The element of encouragement . **15:5b**

**(Element #3)** - The element of unity . **15:6a**

There are many ways to glorify God – 1) Go to church services; 2) Carefully listen to God’s Word; 3) Faithfully serve in church; 4) Sing praises; 5) Give offerings; 6) Witness. But perhaps the toughest of all is to minister to each other and help each other become healthy as Christians.