

Romans 15:1-3 Commentary

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Click chart to enlarge

Chart from recommended resource [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission
[Romans Overview Chart](#) - Charles Swindoll

Source: Dr David Cooper
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- R **Ruin** (Romans 1:17 – 3:20) – The utter sinfulness of humanity
- O **Offer** (Romans 3:21-31) – God’s offer of justification by grace
- M **Model** (Romans 4:1-25) – Abraham as a model for saving faith
- A **Access** (Romans 5:1-11) – The benefits of justification
- N **New Adam** (Romans 5:12-21) – We are children of two “Adams”
- S **Struggle w/ Sin** (Romans 6-8) Struggle, sanctification, and victory

ROMANS ROAD to RIGHTEOUSNESS

Romans 1:18-3:20	Romans 3:21-5:21	Romans 6:1-8:39	Romans 9:1-11:36	Romans 12:1-16:27
SIN	SALVATION	SANCTIFICATION	SOVEREIGNTY	SERVICE
NEED FOR SALVATION	WAY OF SALVATION	LIFE OF SALVATION	SCOPE OF SALVATION	SERVICE OF SALVATION
God's Holiness In Condemning Sin	God's Grace In Justifying Sinners	God's Power In Sanctifying Believers	God's Sovereignty In Saving Jew and Gentile	Gods Glory The Object of Service
Deadliness of Sin	Design of Grace	Demonstration of Salvation		
		Power Given	Promises Fulfilled	Paths Pursued
Righteousness Needed	Righteousness Credited	Righteousness Demonstrated	Righteousness Restored to Israel	Righteousness Applied
God's Righteousness IN LAW	God's Righteousness IMPUTED	God's Righteousness OBEYED	God's Righteousness IN ELECTION	God's Righteousness DISPLAYED
Slaves to Sin	Slaves to God			Slaves Serving God
Doctrine				Duty
Life by Faith				Service by Faith
Modified from Irving L. Jensen's chart above				

Romans 15:1 Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves.

Greek: Opheilomen (1PPAI) de hemeis oi dunatoi ta asthenemata ton adunaton bastazein (PAN) kai me heautois areskein (PAN)

Amplified: We who are strong [in our convictions and of robust faith] ought to bear with the failings and the frailties and the tender scruples of the weak; [we ought to help carry the doubts and qualms of others] and not to please ourselves.

NLT: We may know that these things make no difference, but we cannot just go ahead and do them to please ourselves. We must be considerate of the doubts and fears of those who think these things are wrong.

Phillips: We who have strong faith ought to shoulder the burden of the doubts and qualms of others and not just to go our own sweet way.

Wuest: As for us, then, the strong ones, we have a moral obligation to be bearing the infirmities of those who are not strong, and not to be pleasing ourselves.

Young's Literal: And we ought -- we who are strong -- to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves;

NOW WE WHO ARE STRONG OUGHT TO BEAR THE WEAKNESSES OF THOSE WITHOUT STRENGTH: Opheilomen (1PPAI) de hemeis oi dunatoi ta asthenemata ton adunaton bastazein (PAN) :

- Ro 15:1, 27, 13:8, 1:14, 8:12) (Ro 14:1 1Co 8:1-13; 9:22; 12:22, 23,24 Gal 6:1,2 which refers to sin 1Th 5:14
- [Romans 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Remember that in Romans 14 and Romans 15 Paul is teaching how the one who is being transformed by the renewing of their mind should demonstrate this by a change in attitude toward those with whom they disagree or hold different values.

Middletown Bible - The Law of Love (Romans 14:1-15:3) - For further help in understanding how to live so as to not cause a brother to stumble, see our paper entitled, "[Guidance: 67 Biblical Tests to Use in Deciding Upon a Course of Action](#)"

Spurgeon...

If any course of action which would be safe to us would be dangerous to weaker brethren, we must consider their infirmity and deny ourselves for their sakes.

When we are free from scruples upon any point, and feel that there are things that we may do because we are strong, yet let us not do them if thereby we should grieve others who are weak. Let us think of their infirmities; and whatever liberty we may feel entitled to claim for ourselves, let us look at the matter from the standpoint of other people as well as from our Own, that we may bear the infirmities of the weak, and not seek to please ourselves.

Now - The Greek conjunction "**de**" which could be translated "**but**" which would emphasize the contrast with the weak brother who doubts, eats, is condemned and sins (cf Ro 14:23-note)

Note that this chapter is probably one of the most unfortunate chapter divisions in the book of Romans because it breaks right into the flow of thought that begins in (Ro 14:1-note) and continues through (Ro 15:13-note), dealing with the area of the dynamics, dangers and duties of believer's interrelating in this area of non essentials. So don't begin your study on (Ro 15:1) thinking this is a new theme. You must go back and read in context to understand Paul's flow of thought continuing the exhortation to brotherly love and mutual kindness and forbearance as a practical manifestation of having presented our bodies to God as a living and holy sacrifice (Ro 12:1-note, Ro 12:2-note).

We Who is we? Paul identifies himself with the strong believers = those whose personal convictions allow them more freedom than the weak.

Ought (3784) (**opheilo** from **ophéllo** = heap up) means to owe something to someone. Literally it speaks of financial indebtedness and thus means to owe money, to be in debt, or to describe that which is due (Mt 18:28, Lk 7:41, 16:5, 7, Philemon 1:18). The verb **opheilo** was sometimes used to describe "the debt" itself. Figuratively, **opheilo** describes a sense of indebtedness to someone for something. For example, it was used to describe owing good will (1Co 7:3), love (Ro 13:8 = we can never love enough and will always "owe" this debt).

Opheilo in most of the NT uses conveys the sense of necessity, duty or to be under obligation (obligation = moral requirement which conveys the binding force of civility, kindness or gratitude, when the performance of a duty cannot be enforced by law). The idea is that one is held or bound by duty, moral obligation or necessity to do something. Thus **opheilo** can mean that it behooves one to do something (Mt 23:16, 18). **Opheilo** is used of a necessity imposed either by law and duty, by reason, by the times, or by the nature of the matter under consideration (Lk 17:10, Jn 13:14 = you also [because Jesus washed their feet] ought to wash one another's feet, Jn 19:7, Acts 17:29 = **ought** not to think..., Ro 15:1, 27 = they are **indebted** to them...**indebted** to minister, Eph 5:28 = husbands **ought** also to love their own wives, 2Th 1:3, 2:13 = **ought** to give thanks to God; He 5:12 = **ought** to be teachers; 1Jn 2:16 = **ought** to walk [like Jesus], 1Jn 3:16 = [Jesus laid down His life] we **ought** to lay down our lives for the brethren; 1Jn 4:11 = [because of God's love] we also **ought** to love one another; 3Jn 1:8 = we **ought** to support such men)

English dictionaries say that "**ought**" is used to express obligation [ought to pay our debts], advisability [ought to take care of yourself], natural expectation [ought to be here by now], or logical consequence [the result ought to be infinity]. Ought expresses prudent expediency (you **ought** to be more careful with your money)

Note that **opheilo** speaks of a **moral obligation** as contrasted to a **necessity** in the nature of the case as is **dei** [word study].

The original Greek sentence order places emphasis on the **obligation** or **debt** we owe (Young's literal = "and we ought - we who are strong..."). The sense is because we are **strong** we have a debt or moral obligation to aid those who are weak.

Paul uses the same verb, **opheilo** to explain our obligation to continually owe (Ro 13:8-note). The implication is that the strong are to show agape love, that love which reaches out and picks up the weak brother because it seeks his highest good and it does so expecting nothing in return. From the context apparently the strong brethren in Rome were living to please self. Things haven't changed much in the church have they?

Opheilo - 35x in 34v and is translated in the NAS as had(1), have(1), indebted(2), must(1), obligated(3), ought(15), owe(4), owed(4), owes(1), responsible(1), should(2).

Matthew 18:28 "But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who **owed** him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, 'Pay back what you owe.'

Matthew 18:30 "He was unwilling however, but went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was **owed**.

Matthew 18:34 "And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was **owed** him.

Matthew 23:16 "Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, that is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is **obligated**.'

Matthew 23:18 "And, 'Whoever swears by the altar, that is nothing, but whoever swears by the offering upon it, he is **obligated**.'

Luke 7:41 "A certain moneylender had two debtors: one **owed** five hundred denarii, and the other fifty.

Luke 11:4 'And forgive us our sins, For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is **indebted** to us. And lead us not into temptation.'

Luke 16:5 "And he summoned each one of his master's debtors, and he began saying to the first, 'How much do you **owe** my master?'

Luke 16:7 "Then he said to another, 'And how much do you **owe**?' And he said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.'

Luke 17:10 "So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we **ought** to have done.'

John 13:14 "If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also **ought** to wash one another's feet.

John 19:7 The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and by that law He **ought** to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God."

Acts 17:29 "Being then the offspring of God, we **ought** not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone (idolatry is directly attacked as an affront to God and a devaluation of Him), an image formed by the art and thought of man .

Romans 13:8 **Owe** nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.

Romans 15:1 Now we who are strong **ought** to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves.

Romans 15:27 Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are **indebted** to them (the Jerusalem saints). For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are **indebted** to minister to them also in material things.

1 Corinthians 5:10 I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters; for then you would have to go out of the world.

1 Corinthians 7:36 But if any man thinks that he is acting unbecomingly toward his virgin daughter (either a fiancée, a daughter, or the ward of a guardian), if she should be of full age (past the bloom of youth), and if it **must** be so, let him do what he wishes, he does not sin; let her marry.

1 Corinthians 9:10 Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman **ought** to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops.

1 Corinthians 11:7 For a man **ought** not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man.

1 Corinthians 11:10 Therefore the woman **ought** to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.

2 Corinthians 12:11 I have become foolish; you yourselves compelled me. Actually **I should** have been commended by you, for in no respect was I inferior to the most eminent apostles, even though I am a nobody.

2 Corinthians 12:14 Here for this third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not be a burden to you; for I do not seek what is yours, but you; for children are not **responsible** to save up for their parents (Literal = or the children ought not for the parents to lay up), but parents for their children.

Ephesians 5:28 So husbands **ought** also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself;

2 Thessalonians 1:3 We **ought** always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater;

2 Thessalonians 2:13 But we **should** always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.

Philemon 1:18 But if he has wronged you in any way, **owes** you anything, charge that to my account;

Hebrews 2:17 Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that **Hemight** become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

Hebrews 5:3 and because of it he is **obligated** to offer sacrifices for sins, as for the people, so also for himself.

Hebrews 5:12 For though by this time you **ought** to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

1 John 2:6 the one who says he abides in Him **ought** himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

Comment: In other words your "actions speak louder than your words" or as James would say, "your faith has works" and thus your faith is genuine. If you do not have godly conduct (note not "perfection" but one's general "direction"), you are not a believer, no matter how loudly you claim (or protest).

NET Bible Note: "Abides" = The Greek verb **meno** (which) is commonly translated into contemporary English as "remain" or "abide," but both of these translations have some problems: "**Abide**" has become in some circles almost a "technical term" for some sort of special intimate fellowship or close relationship between the Christian and God, so that one may speak of Christians who are "abiding" and Christians who are not. It is accurate to say the word indicates a close, intimate (and permanent) relationship between the believer and God. However, it is very important to note that for the author of the Gospel of John and the Johannine Epistles every genuine Christian has this type of relationship with God, and the person who does not have this type of relationship (cf. 2Jn 9) is not a believer at all (in spite of what he or she may claim).

1 John 3:16 We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and **wought** to lay down our lives for the brethren.

1 John 4:11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also **ought** to love one another.

3 John 1:8 Therefore we **ought** to support such men, that we may be fellow workers with the truth.

Opheilo - 5x in the Septuagint - Deut 15:2; Job 6:20; Pr 14:9; Isa 24:2; Ezek 18:7

Strong (1415) (dunatos) pertains to having the ability to perform some function by virtue of inherent ability and resources. The attribute of being capable or competent, including in some uses political power or influence (cp 1Cor 1:26). Dunatos is a Name given to the Lord God in Luke 1:49 (cp Septuagint use in Ps 45:3-[note](#))

Dunatos - 32x in 32v - Matt 19:26; 24:24; 26:39; Mark 9:23; 10:27; 13:22; 14:35, 36; Luke 1:49; 14:31; 18:27; 24:19; Acts 2:24; 7:22; 11:17; 18:24; 20:16; 25:5; **Ro 4:21; 9:22; 11:23; 12:18; 15:1**; 1 Cor 1:26; 2 Cor 10:4; 12:10; 13:9; Gal 4:15; 2 Tim 1:12; Titus 1:9; Heb 11:19; Jas 3:2. The NAS renders dunatos as able(6), could(1), impossible*(1), influential men(1), man of power(1), mighty(3), Mighty One(1), possible(12), power(1), powerful(1), strong(3), strong enough(1).

Some of the translations add strong "in the faith" which is not in the Greek text but which is a reasonable interpretation in context.

The word Paul chose for "**without strength**" is **adunatos (102)** = a prefix meaning w/o or negation of what follows + **dunatós (1415)** possible, able, or powerful.

So **adunatos (102)** means without strength, powerless, disabled, incapable, pertaining to not being able to do or experience something. Keep in mind that "strong" & "weak" are relative terms in the church and we are all "strong" in some respects & in some situations. The point is that what Paul is exhorting cannot be easily set aside as if it is advice only to someone else!

Adunatos - 10x in 10v - Matt 19:26; Mark 10:27; Luke 18:27; Acts 14:8; Rom 8:3; 15:1; Heb 6:4, 18; 10:4; 11:6

Bear (941) (bastazo) means to pick up and carry a weight and is used of carrying a pitcher of water (Mark 14:13), of carrying a man (Acts 21:35). Bastazo was used of carrying the cross literally (John 19:17) and carrying the cross, figuratively (Lk 14:27). It was used figuratively of bearing an obligation (Acts 15:10).

Bastazo - 27x in 27v - Matt 3:11; 8:17; 20:12; Mark 14:13; Luke 7:14; 10:4; 11:27; 14:27; 22:10; John 10:31; 12:6; 16:12; 19:17; 20:15; Acts 3:2; 9:15; 15:10; 21:35; Rom 11:18; 15:1; Gal 5:10; 6:2, 5, 17; Rev 2:2f; 17:7. The NAS renders bastazo as bear(8), bearers(1), bearing(1), bore(1), borne(1), carried(2), carried away(2), carries(1), carry(2), carrying(2), endure(1), endured(1), pilfer(1), remove(1), supports(1), took up(1).

Bastazo conveys the idea to bear with, be indulgent to, endure patiently, or not to contend with your weaker brethren.

To bear the weaknesses of fellow believers is not simply to tolerate those weaknesses but to help carry them. Paul commands the Galatian believers to

Bear (bastazo in present tense = connotes carrying something with endurance) one another's **burdens** (extra heavy loads = in this context = difficulties or problems people have trouble dealing with), and thus fulfill the law of Christ. (the law of love which fulfills the entire law)" (Gal 6:2)

Paul is referring to failures, temptations, testings, and trials and telling all of us as believers that instead of standing off at a distance and criticizing, we should fly to the side of our brother or sister in trouble or distress and help them in every possible way. How are you doing with the call to bear weaknesses and burdens of your brethren?

Bear does not mean putting up with and forbearing with an attitude of begrudging. It means to bear the weak along, to support them, to carry them along as a father or mother would carry a child—in love and tenderness, understanding and care. Don't get angry with them, don't defy them, don't cut them off from your love and concern, but try to please them, patiently instruct them, and edify them to their own good. They don't need criticism, they need instruction. They don't need neglect, they need attention. Remember the - Only the believer who has presented himself or herself to God as a living sacrifice will carry out this duty with delight rather than drudgery.

How do we help carry weaker brethren (in context of Romans 14)?

As Paul writes in the next verse the simple (but not really so simple in everyday practice) answer is not to please ourselves. Not being judgmental, critical or condescending and by showing respect for the sincere views or practices even though we don't necessarily agree with them. As long as these different views are concerning the "non essentials" where the Bible does not give clear cut guidelines, we are to walk in love & pursue the things that make for peace & the building up of the brother.

Compare Paul's similar command in (Php 2:3, 4 -note, cp Ga6:2 which also uses the verb "[bastazo](#)" to carry or bear)....if it is going to be a stumbling block to our brother—we do not do it. We please, help, support, and live for the good of our brothers and sisters so that they might be edified and built up in the faith.

Wuest explains that...

When an informed believer foregoes an action which he knows is right, but which a weaker Christian thinks to be wrong, and does it for the sake of not offending that weaker Christian, he curtails his own freedom of action, denies himself something that is legitimately his, and this is a burden to him. Denney says,

"Paul says, 'bear' their infirmities: because the restrictions and limitations laid by this charity on the liberty of the strong are a burden to them."

While Paul had in mind the particular case of scruples, yet Alford thinks that these infirmities are general and include various types of weaknesses At all events, the principle applies to these latter also. (Wuest, K. S. Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: Eerdmans)

John MacArthur adds that...

"The idea is that of showing genuine, loving, and practical consideration for other believers. We are not to argue about minor issues or be critical of those who may still be sensitive about a former religious practice or taboo. The injunction is for mature believers to voluntarily and lovingly refrain from exercising their liberty in ways that might needlessly offend the consciences of less mature brothers and sisters in Christ, those who are without strength....He was not speaking of compromising the gospel or godly standards of living in order to gain acceptance and approval by the world, a sin he strongly condemned. (Gal 1:10). On the contrary, he was speaking of relinquishing personal liberties and advantages for the sake of fellow believers—even for the sake of unbelievers, if doing so might be instrumental in leading them to Christ." ([MacArthur, J: Romans 9-16. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

Speaking of "**do's, differences and don'ts**" Ray Stedman adds this one:

"I was just reading this morning that Dr. Carl McIntire, the flamboyant fundamentalist Presbyterian preacher, is now attacking Christians for going along with the change from Fahrenheit to Celsius, or centigrade. He says it is nothing but a sneaky Communist plot to take over the world by degrees! So there are a lot of things you could get upset about and divide over"

Stedman goes on to add that...

Someone has well said that Christians can be compared to porcupines on a cold winter night, they need to huddle together in order to warm each other, but, as they draw together, their prickly spines dig into each other and they have to pull apart, so all night long it is a process of huddling together and pulling apart. Many churches, I am afraid, fit that description very aptly. This is the essential problem that Paul faces in the application of all the mighty doctrine that we have had in Romans thus far -- the practical matter of getting along with other Christians. The first thirteen verses of Chap 15 deal with two major causes of division among Christians. There are those divisions that arise from a difference of conviction, of point of view. Then there are those divisions that arise from difference of background. These two factors are at work today to divide Christians all over the world....Now, please, don't look around and be glad that so-and-so is here this morning, listen patiently yourself as we look at this...: The problem is those weak (or we might call them legalistic) Christians who have the irritating habit of differing with us about certain points of view. They are rather short-sighted, perhaps, in their outlook, and they grow offended at the liberty others feel they have in participating in actions and activities that the first group deplores...? I think the fact that Christians differ in the matter of the use of the RSV as compared with the KJV in public reading and teaching is one example of a different point of view which can create divisions among Christians." ([Power to Please](#))

Weaknesses (**asthenema** from **astheneo** = to be weak or powerless) describes the result of being weak (as indicated by the suffix -ma). Here Paul is referring to the conscientious scruples (asthenema = plural in this passage) which arise in those who are weak in the faith [cf. 2Co 11:29]. Paul is describing the qualms or misgivings these saints have as the result of their conscience being bound to legalistic requirements.

The NLT paraphrases the idea of **weaknesses** this way...

We who are strong must be considerate of **those who are sensitive about things like this**. We must not just please ourselves.

Without strength (102) (**adunatos** from **a** = without + **dunatos** [word study] = possible, able, or powerful from **dunamai** [word study] = to be able or have power by virtue of inherent ability and resources. Note the stem *duna-* or *dyna-* conveying the basic sense of ability or capability, power, strength, might) means impossible, incapable of being or of occurring, incapable of being done. **Adunatos** is used twice to convey the idea of one who is impotent, has no strength or lacks capability in functioning adequately, once in a literal sense (Acts 14:8 below = powerless) and here in Romans 15:1 by Paul the sense of spiritual weakness, of those who do not "strongly" believe or have a "strong" faith.

Regarding those who are **without strength** J C Ryle makes an interesting statement...

There is a wide difference between the highest and lowest measure of grace possessed by those who are "born again." There are real and true Christians who are only "babes" in spiritual attainments, and there are others who are "strong," and vigorous, and able to do great things for Christ (1John 2:12, 13, 14). The Scripture speaks of little faith and great faith, of little strength and great strength. One thing only is certain,-- every regenerate person has more or less the marks of regeneration, and he who has none of them is not born again (Mt. 14:31, 15:28; Rev. 3:8; Ro 15:1). (J. C. Ryle. The Upper Room)

AND NOT JUST PLEASE OURSELVES: kai me heautois areskein (PAN):

- See cross references on selflessness - Proverbs 11:26 Proverbs 18:1 Proverbs 28:27 Romans 2:8 Romans 15:1-2 1 Cor. 13:5 Galatians 5:19-21a
- Galatians 6:2 Phil. 2:3-4 2 Tim. 3:2-4 James 2:15-16 James 3:14-16 1 John 3:17
- [Romans 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

In short if we live simply to please ourselves (the converse of Phil 2:3, 4note, Php 2:5-note), we are clearly not following in the steps of our Lord Jesus Christ Who lived to please the Father by serving others (cp Mk 10:45)

Please (700) (**aresko** [word study]) means behaving properly toward one with whom one is related. The idea is that "we should not do just what we ourselves want to do" or "we should not do just what is going to make us happy." Does this truth ever run counter to our modern society which is much like the days of the Judges for "in those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes." (Judges 21:25-note)

What's the implication of Paul's admonition? That the saints at Rome were focused inward rather than outward. If you are prone

toward being judgmental and exclusive, this is a big pill to swallow. If you are the kind of person who is sure he is right and must have his way, you doubtless are finding yourself very uncomfortable with Paul's exhortation (and if we are honest, this probably includes most of us!) We should be willing to deny ourselves (Mark 8:34), if by it we may promote the edification of others.

In context Paul is referring particularly to "opinions" (Ro 14:1-note) about meats, drinks and days. But the broader application is to Christian conduct in general, where we are not to make our own gratification the standard of our conduct, but are to seek the welfare of others. (See examples of Jesus' Phil 2:3, 4, 5-note & Paul 1Cor 9:19,22, 1Cor 10:33 cf 1Cor 13:5, 10:24, Mt 6:24-note). 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 brethren takes precedence over what we ourselves would like to do.

John MacArthur writes that "The right use of Christian liberty, which the strong believer understands and appreciates, often involves self-sacrifice. When our true motivation is to please Christ by helping "to bear the weaknesses of those without strength" (v1a), we can expect to forfeit certain legitimate liberties, when exercising them would harm a weaker brother or sister....But the Lord does not grant those freedoms just so we can selfishly please ourselves. He grants them for the benefit of His entire church. Every believer has the same liberty in Christ as every other believer, but because believers vary greatly in spiritual knowledge and maturity, the careless exercise of a liberty by one member can do great harm to the conscience and spiritual well-being of another member and even to the well-being of an entire congregation. ([MacArthur, J: Romans 9-16. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

Most of us are aware of churches that have split over the smallest issues, such as where the piano ought to be placed or what color the carpet should be!

ILLUSTRATION - The story is told of two congregations that were located only a few blocks from each other in a small community. They thought it might be better if they would merge and become one united, larger, and more effective body rather than two struggling churches. They were not able to consummate the amalgamation because they could not agree on how they would recite "The Lord's Prayer". One church preferred "forgive us our trespasses," while the other church favored "forgive us our debts." The local newspaper quipped "One church went back to its trespasses while the other returned to its debts."

Middletown Bible sums up this section of Romans - Here in Romans chapter 15, Paul continues his theme from Chapter 14, showing the strong believer's responsibility toward the weaker brother. Perhaps this is an unfortunate chapter division, because the end of chapter 14 helps us to understand the beginning of chapter 15. (Chapter divisions were added at a later time and were not part of the original God-inspired text.)

Paul sets forth the responsibility of those strong in the faith. "We that are strong"--Paul includes himself among the strong. The word "ought" means "we must, we are obligated." That is, we have a moral obligation. This moral obligation is towards the weak. We owe them our love (Rom. 13:8). The term "infirmities" means weaknesses, literally "lack of strength." The verb "bear" means "to carry, to support as a burden, to bear a burden, bear patiently, put up with." Consider the example of the Lord Jesus with His disciples. They were weak in many ways but He patiently bore their infirmities, was patient with them, and gently brought them along to maturity.

The responsibility of the strong believer towards the weak believer:

- To receive the weak believer, as God has (Rom. 14:1,3)
- To not despise the weak believer (Rom. 14:2)
- To not put a stumbling block in his way (Rom. 14:13,20)
- To walk "charitably," that is, according to love (Rom. 14:15)
- To be willing to sacrifice our own rights and liberties so as not to bring ruin to our brother (Ro 14:15)
- To pursue peace in the body of Christ (Rom. 14:17,19)
- To edify and build up the weak believer, erecting stepping stones to growth (Rom. 14:19)
- To not flaunt our liberty before our weak brother (Rom. 14:22)
- To bear patiently his weaknesses (Rom. 15:1)
- To not be pleasing self (Rom. 15:1)

The strong believer is not to be pleasing himself. That is, he is not to be gratifying his own selfish desires. Our first concern must not be for self-gratification but the weak brother's edification, even if this involves personal sacrifice and self-denial (saying "NO" to self). ([ROMANS CHAPTER 15](#))

Greek: hekastos hemon to plesion **aresketo (3SPAM)** eis to agathon pros oikodomen:

Amplified: Let each one of us make it a practice to please (make happy) his neighbor for his good and for his true welfare, to edify him [to strengthen him and build him up spiritually].

NLT: We should please others. If we do what helps them, we will build them up in the Lord.

Phillips: Our actions should mean the good of others - should help them to build up their characters.

Wuest: Each one of us, let him be pleasing his neighbor with a view to his good, resulting in his edification.

Young's Literal: for let each one of us please the neighbour for good, unto edification, d with you,

LET EACH OF US PLEASE HIS NEIGHBOR: hekastos hemon to plesion aresketo (3SPAM):

- Ro 14:19, 1Co 9:19, 20, 21, 22, 10:24,33, 11:1, 13:5)
- [Romans 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Each ([1538](#)) (**hekastos**) means every one, every single one = each one of a totality.

Use of "**each**" seems to make this universal in its Christian application and is a duty both weak and strong are to do. There is no list of exclusions or exceptions.

Who is my **neighbor**? (Luke 10:29-37) Anyone "**near**" and anyone in "**need**" (Ro 13:8, 9, 10-note).

In context it will difficult to obey this command if we are still seeking to please ourselves (Ro 15:1). So first "put off the old" and then "put on the new". And try to instruct and help them to see the reasons why you act the way you do about these things, but don't cut them off. Don't treat them as something inferior in the way of Christians, but love them and please them in this sense.

Us - note that Paul does not excuse himself.

Please ([700](#)) (**aresko**) is a command (present imperative) for each of us to habitually behave properly toward those with whom we are related. This command by Paul goes against the whole tenor of our times, which counsels people to "look out for number one," (cp 2Ti 3:1,2-note) and despises those who live lives of real sacrifice for the sake of others. Paul is not talking about being a "man-pleaser." Such a person may want to **please** his neighbor, but not for his **good**. Paul is pointing the way to true joy and fulfillment in life - get your eyes off of yourself, start building up others and you will find yourself built up. It is more blessed to give than to receive. Real **JOY** comes about when we follow the order - **J**esus, **O**thers, **Y**ourself!

Wuest nicely sums up this section writing...

We are not to refuse to do this (bear the weaknesses of those without strength) and thus please ourselves. Denney remarks,

It is very easy for self-pleasing and mere willfulness to shelter themselves under the disguise of Christian principle. But there is only one Christian principle which has no qualification—love.

The pleasing one's neighbor in this context refers to the act of the believer foregoing a legitimate act because that weaker Christian thinks it to be wrong. It pleases him because it removes a source of temptation to him to do that thing, and makes his attempt to live a life pleasing to God easier. But the stronger Christian is to do this only in the instance where the weaker Christian would be edified or built up in the Christian life. Paul (Ro 15:3) then enforces his exhortation by citing the example of our Lord Jesus who pleased not Himself. The writer to the Hebrews speaks of this in Heb 12:2 when he refers to our Lord who *instead of (huper) the joy then present with Him, endured the Cross*. It was the joy of heaven, of the Father's smile, of the worship of the angels that was His legitimate prerogative, that He voluntarily set aside to drink the Gethsemane cup, the ingredients of which He did not want, namely, to be made sin and to lose the fellowship of the Father as He hung on the Cross. Paul quotes from a Messianic Psalm (Ps 69:9) in substantiating his assertion rather than taking an incident from our Lord's life. ([Wuest, K. S. Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: Eerdmans](#))

- Ro 14:19, Phil 2:4, 5, Acts 20:35 Gal 6:2, Jas 1:27, 1Co 3:9, 14:3,5,12, 26 2Co 10:8, 12:19, 13:10 Eph 2:21, 4:12, 16, 29
- [Romans 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Good (18) (**agathos** [word study]) describes that which is "good" in its character or constitution and profitable or beneficial in its effect.

Edification (3619) (**oikodome** from **oikos** = dwelling + **demo** = to build) refers literally to the building of a house but here refers to that which results in the other's spiritual profit or advancement. For example, pastors and teachers are charged with the duty of "equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the **building up** (oikodome) of the body of Christ." (Ephesians 4:12-note) Paul reminds the Corinthian church that "When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for **edification** (oikodome) ." (1Cor 14:26)

Paul himself in a sense practiced this principle writing to the Corinthians "for this reason (What reason?term of conclusion In previous verse = that they might be made fully ready, made spiritually mature, put in an appropriate condition as when one outfits a ship for a voyage, equip an army for battle or , mend a broken bone or adjust a twisted ankle = this describes the purpose of the epistle of 2Cor) I am writing these things while absent, in order that when present I may not use severity, in accordance with the authority which the Lord gave me, for **building up** (oikodome) and not for tearing down (demolishing you or destroying you)." (2Cor 13:9)

One other practical use of **oikodome** is found in Ephesians where Paul exhorted the brethren to

"Let no unwholesome (used of rotten fruit and spoiled food ~ "rotten word") word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for **edification** (**oikodome**) according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear (the mature Christian not only speaks the truth but speaks it in love)." (Ephesians 4:29-note)

Paul is reminding us that our speech should edify our brethren by being helpful, constructive, encouraging, instructive, and uplifting. Sometimes it must be corrective but even then it is edifying when done in the right spirit for as Pr 25:12 admonishes "Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold is a wise reprove to a listening ear." The preacher of Ecclesiastes "sought to find delightful words and to write words of truth correctly," and such words spoken by a wise man "are like goads ... and well-driven nails" (Eccl 12:10, 11).

Beware: This principle must be applied with care for great harm is done when Christians assume that they know what is good for others. This does not mean that the weak control the church, that they have only to express a scruple and all rush to conform.

As Morris says "Paul is not laying down a rule of conduct but enunciating a principle of tender concern."

As regards our brothers in Christ we are to be building them up not hurting, stumbling, destroying or tearing them down. This will probably entail the sacrifice of some of our own welfare and pleasure. Note how life-changing this point really is. The serious believer no longer asks if questionable behavior is right and moral, but if it is good for his brother. Will this thing edify and build up his brother? (Mk 12:30, 31 Jn 13:34, 35 Ro 13:10-note, Ro 14:19-note Gal 5:14 Ep 4:29-note Jas 2:8). All too often, Christians find it easier to tear each other down instead of building each other up; this is a classic strategy of Satan against the church that must be resisted.

Pastor Ray Stedman writes: "There are two thumbnail rules to follow when you have to make a quick decision as to whether you ought to insist on liberty in a certain area, or give way to someone else's qualms, or prejudices, or differences of viewpoint. The first rule is: Choose to please your neighbor rather than yourself. Do not insist on your way of doing things; be quick to give in. After all, this is what love does. Love does not insist on its own rights, Paul tells us in First Corinthians 13. Therefore, if you are loving in your approach, love will adjust and adapt to others....The second rule, however, says to be careful that your giving in does not allow your neighbor to be confirmed in his weakness, that you do not leave him without encouragement to grow, or to re-think his position. I think this is very important, and it reflects some of the things that Paul has said earlier in this account. We are to seek to build one another up. As I have pointed out before, in all these kinds of questions, if we do nothing but give way to people, and give in to their weaknesses, the church eventually ends up living at the level of the weakest conscience in its midst. This presents a twisted and distorted view of Christian liberty, and the world gets false ideas about what is important, and what Christianity is concerned about. So this helps to balance the situation. Please your neighbor, but for his own good, always leaving something there to challenge his thinking, or make him reach out a bit, and possibly change his viewpoint." ([Our Great Example](#))

Stedman tells this story: "In Sacramento this past week, a man made an appointment to see me. He told me he was a teacher in a

Christian school there and he had been asked by the board of the school to enforce a rule prohibiting students from wearing their hair long. It was a rule that he did not agree with, so he found himself in a serious dilemma. If he did not enforce the rule, the board had given him clear indication that he would lose his job. If he did enforce it, he would be upsetting the students and their parents, who felt that this was a matter that did not merit that kind of attention. Our culture has long since changed from regarding long hair as a symbol of rebellion, so this man found himself in between a rock and a hard place. His plea to me was, "What shall I do?" My counsel, whether right or wrong, in line with what we had learned here earlier in Romans 14, was that we should not push our ideas of liberty to the degree that they would upset the peace. So I said to him, "For the sake of peace, go along with the school board and enforce the rule for this year. But make a strong plea to the board to re-think their position and to change their viewpoint. At the end of the year if they are unwilling to do that, perhaps you might well consider moving to a different place, or getting another position. That way you would not be upsetting things, and creating a division or a faction within the school." ([Our Great Example](#))

Middletown Bible - Every single believer has a duty and obligation to please his neighbor. Paul is not saying that we should be men pleasers. "For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Gal 1:10). Those who are pleasing men are not pleasing Christ and not serving Him. The man pleaser is actually pleasing himself. He is being nice to people for his own selfish benefit and advantage. The "neighbor pleaser" that Paul is describing in this verse is not seeking his own advantage, but is seeking the good of his neighbor. He is willing to personally sacrifice for the sake of his neighbor's welfare. This is further explained by Paul in 1Corinthians 10:33--"Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved." Compare 1Corinthians 13:5--"love seeketh not her own." Here's the proper attitude: "I love my neighbor and I am seeking his good and his welfare, even God's highest and best for him. I want him to be edified and built up, even if this requires great personal sacrifice on my part. I want this person to be spiritually healthy and spiritually wealthy!" ([ROMANS CHAPTER 15](#))

HELPFUL HONKS (Romans 15:1-6) - Each fall we are visited by flocks of migrating geese who stop off at a meadow near our home. For several weeks those birds fly in long, wavy V-formations over our house, honking as they go. But then, as winter approaches, they are off again on their long flight south.

A student of mine furthered my education and my appreciation for these visitors from the north. I learned that geese fly at speeds of 40 to 50 miles per hour. They travel in formation because as each bird flaps its wings, it creates an updraft for the bird behind it. They can go 70 percent farther in a group than they could if they flew alone.

Christians are like that in a way. When we have a common purpose, we are propelled by the thrust of others who share those same goals. We can get a lot further together than we can alone.

Geese also honk at one another. They are not critics but encouragers. Those in the rear sound off to exhort those up front to stay on course and maintain their speed. We too move ahead much more easily if there is someone behind us encouraging us to stay on track and keep going.

Is there someone flying in formation with you today to whom you might give some "helpful honks?"— Haddon W. Robinson [Our Daily Bread](#). Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Let's encourage one another
As we seek to stay on track;
If we keep our goal before us,
We will not be looking back. —Sper

**We can go a lot farther together
than we can alone.**

Romans 15:3 For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "THE REPROACHES OF THOSE WHO REPROACHED YOU FELL ON ME."

CSB For even the Messiah did not please Himself. On the contrary, as it is written, The insults of those who insult You have fallen on Me.

ESV For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me."

KJV For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell

on me.

GWN Christ did not think only of himself. Rather, as Scripture says, "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me."

NET For even Christ did not please himself, but just as it is written, "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me."

NAB For Christ did not please himself; but, as it is written, "The insults of those who insult you fall upon me."

NIV For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me."

NLT For even Christ didn't live to please himself. As the Scriptures say, "The insults of those who insult you, O God, have fallen on me."

YLT for even the Christ did not please himself, but, according as it hath been written, 'The reproaches of those reproaching Thee fell upon me;'

Paul quotes verbatim from last half of the Septuagint (LXX) (Greek translation of Hebrew OT) of (Psalm 69:9-note). Here is the Septuagint translation. Note how even the tenses of the verbs are the same in the Septuagint (LXX) and the Romans passage.

hoti o zelos tou oikou sou katephagen (3SAAI: 1st part quoted in [John 2:17](#)) me **kai hoi oneidismoι ton oneidizonton (PAPMPG) se epepesan (3PAAI) ep eme**

FOR EVEN CHRIST DID NOT PLEASE HIMSELF : kai gar o Christos ouch heauto eresen (3SAAI):

- Php 2:5, 6, 7, 8 Ps 40:6, 7, 8 Mt 26:39,42 Jn 4:34; 5:30; 6:38; 8:29
- [Romans 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Spurgeon comments that Christ "took the most trying place in the whole field of battle; He stood where the fray' was hottest. He did not seek to be among His disciples as a king is in the midst of his troops, guarded and protected in the time of strife; but He exposed Himself to the fiercest part of all the conflict. What Jesus did, that should we who are His followers do, no one of us considering himself, and his own interests, but all of us considering our brethren and the cause of Christ in general.

Paul is explaining why we should be willing to lay down our "rights", bear other's weaknesses & seek to please our neighbor for his good & edification. Christ did not please Himself but took the insults meant for God. (Luke 22:42, Phil 2:4,5).

Speaking in **Psalm 40:8-note** and prophetically describing Christ's incarnation as the fulfillment of God's purpose, Christ declares that the will of God was not just in His head—it was inscribed in His very heart...thus leaving us the perfect example and motivation for fulfilling the preceding exhortation...

"I delight to do Thy will, O my God; Thy Law is within my heart."

To the very end of His life this was Jesus' example, Matthew recording that in the garden of Gethsemane, on the eve of His crucifixion...

"He went a little beyond them (Peter, John, James), and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt." (Mt 26:39)

Hodge adds that Christ's example "is constantly held up, not merely as a model, but as a motive."

Paul wants to give us encouragement to be willing to do this.

We hear so much today about "our rights" but Paul is saying for believers we need to take the opposite approach. The issue is not your "rights" but your willingness to do whatever you need to for the other person.

And so he give us Jesus Christ as our Example (1Pe 2:21-note). Had Jesus wanted to please Himself instead of His Father, He would not have divested Himself of His glory and become a Man, certainly not a Bondservant.

Jesus' supreme purpose was to please His Father and to accomplish His Father's will (Jn 4:34, 17:5, 5:30, 6:38, 8:25, 27, 28, 29 Heb 3:1, 2-note). So Paul would say (as in Php 2:5-note) for us to have the attitude that was in Christ Jesus -- give up your rights and build up the body (don't tear down).

BUT AS IT IS WRITTEN THE REPROACHES OF THOSE WHO REPROACHED THEE FELL UPON ME: alla kathos gegraptai (3SRPI): hoi oneidismoi ton oneidizonton se epepesan (3PAAI) ep eme:

- [Romans 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Written (1125) (**grapho** [word study]) is in the **perfect tense** meaning that (Ps 69:9-note) was written in the past and stands written, which speaks of the permanence of God's perfect Word.

John quoted the first part of (Ps 69:9-note) to describe Jesus' purging the temple of the money-changers in (Jn 2:17). Here Paul quotes the last half of this same psalm to present his readers (particularly the "strong") a "model" to motivate them

Reproaches (3680) (**oneidismos**) refers insults or unjustifiable verbal abuse inflicted by others. It describes things spoken disparagingly of a person in manner not justified.

Reproached (3679) (**oneidizo**) means to assail with abusive words, slander, false accusations.

Jesus promised

"Blessed (being fully satisfied no matter circumstances) are you when men **cast insults** (oneidizo) at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me." (Mt 5:11-note)

As Paul says, Jesus fulfilled the Scriptures that predicted that those who did not like God's methods would take it out on Him. The reproaches that were cast against God—the cursing, dishonor, unbelief, denial, hostility, all the shame and rebellion against God—cut the heart of Christ.

He suffered **reproach** on our behalf and thus we should be willing to accept reproaches for His sake. Thus Peter writes...

"If you are **reviled** (oneidizo) for the **name of Christ** (insulted and treated unfairly for being a representative of all that Christ is, and for the public proclamation of the name of Christ), you are blessed, because the **Spirit of glory** (the Spirit who has glory or who is glorious) and of God rests upon you (as the **Shekinah glory cloud** rested on the tabernacle in the OT, indicating the presence of God - when a believer suffers, God's presence specially rests and lifts them to strength and endurance beyond their physical dimension). (1Pe 4:14-note).

The point of Paul's quote from (Ps 69:9-note) is that we should also have the willingness to please the Lord despite misunderstanding, ridicule, slander, deprivation, persecution, and even death. Why? to please our neighbors and build them up.

We must follow Jesus' example even though it might mean that we have to endure insults of some who demand their rights. Paul's exhortation is not about rights but about your willingness to do whatever one needs to do and be whatever one needs to be for the other person...no matter what it costs!

Middletown Bible comments that "Paul now gives us the example of Christ. No better example could be found of a man not pleasing Himself for the sake of the welfare of others. Christ's march to the cross was not a "self-pleasing" experience. Paul quotes from Psalm 69:9--"For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches [insults, revilings] of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me." These words are addressed to God the Father. Christ came into a God-hating and God-reviling world. He represented the Father and took upon Himself the reviling and expressions of hatred which were directed at the Father. Likewise, we represent the Son and we must bear His reproach (see Hebrews 13:13). When we are tempted to please SELF and give ourselves over to SELF-INDULGENCE rather than to the building up of another, then let us consider Calvary's cross and the example of our blessed Saviour who came not to be served, but to serve and to GIVE HIMSELF a ransom for many (Mark 10:42-45). ([ROMANS CHAPTER 15](#))

William Newell writes that...

Christ never "looked after" Himself: the whole world knows this! "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." Yet His whole life, from early morning till late at night, and often into the night, was occupied in ministry to others! The constant drawing upon Him by the multitudes,—upon His time, His love, His teaching, His healing, was a marvelous proof that they could count on the absolute absence of self-pleasing, in Him!"

Ray Stedman comments: Jesus says, "I didn't come to do my work, but yours. But, in the doing of it, I have met reproach. That reproach belongs to you, but it has fallen on me." This, I think, is very indicative of the radical character of true Christian conduct. It moves quite contrary to our natural inclinations. We all like to please ourselves by nature, but, if we are living in the full strength of the indwelling life of Christ, we discover that it is quite possible to live to please our neighbor in this sense of edifying him to his own

good. The result will be that we demonstrate a life that is upsetting and disturbing to people. They don't like it, and sometimes we are reproached for the very liberty that we engage in and the attitude we show of wanting to live for someone else. Have you ever noticed that? People who are genuinely unselfish bother other people; they bother us sometimes. We don't want them around because they make us feel uneasy. They are a little bit too thoughtful of others, and they bother us. That is because the animal in us is very strong and altogether self-centered, and our initial reaction to someone who challenges our liberty is to say, "What do I care what you think," and to go ahead and please ourselves. But if we do this, we are just following the philosophy of the world, because this is the way that the world lives and thinks. ([Power to Please](#))

Good Church Members (Romans 15:1-13) - Phillips Brooks (1835-1893), the great preacher, asked the operator of a local livery stable for the best horse he had. Brooks explained, "I am taking a good friend for a ride and I want the very best for the occasion." As the livery man hitched up a horse to a buggy, he said, "This animal is about as perfect as a horse could be. It is kind, gentle, intelligent, well-trained, obedient, willing, responds instantly to your every command, never kicks, balks, or bites, and lives only to please its driver." Brooks then quietly said to the owner, "Do you suppose you could get that horse to join my church?"

Yes, what a powerful church we could have if we all had those qualities! We are naturally prone to think only of our own desires and wishes and to forget the good of others. Paul said in Romans 15:2, "Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification."

The more we grow in grace, the more we will think about the needs of others. In our church life we should not think only of ourselves but always be willing to yield our desires for the good of the whole. Our example is the Head of the church, Jesus Christ, for even He "did not please Himself" (Ro 15:3).

What kind of church member are you? —M. R. De Haan, M.D. (founder of RBC Ministries) ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

To think Jesus died for me
Upon the cross of Calvary
Should move my selfish heart to pray,
"For others, Lord, I'll live each day." —DJD

**What kind of church would my church be
if all its members were just like me?**