

# For Even Christ...

Romans 15:1-3

**FOCAL Read Responsively** Romans 15:1-3 We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. (2) **Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification.** (3) **For even Christ pleased not himself: but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.**

The Church that God shed His Blood for (**Acts 20:28**) goes by a number of names in the Scripture, but its most illustrative name is “**Body of Christ**” (**1 Corinthians 12:27**). Think of the word “**Body**”. A “**Body**” is a grouping of lesser members which work together to achieve a unified purpose. The individual parts – though valuable – lose their value when separated from the Body. For instance, the heart is a very important part of our bodies. But the heart removed from the Body quickly ceases pumping. Why? Because the Body has other members such as blood, lungs, liver, flesh and muscle that support the heart. Remove the member from the Body and, no matter how important you think it is, that member will soon falter and then fail. This is true of the human Body, and equally true of the Body of Christ and the members of that Body. The members of the Body, the Church, are placed where they are *by Christ*. This is why the Church is called the *Body of Christ*. It belongs to Him. It is purchased by Him. It is being assembled by Him. Its parts are bound together by Him to fulfill the mission that He has set before us. We must work together *in concerted* unison to accomplish that mission. There are no prima donnas in God's Church. Each person there is vitally needed if the Gospel is going to go forth. The main thing set before the Body by Christ is to



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worship the Lord *while we lead others* to worship the Lord. We are to share the Gospel of salvation with as many of the lost as we can *compassionately and lovingly*. We are to, if possible, “**pull them out of the fire**” (**Jude 1:23**). We who are saved need to understand that hell is real, hell is promised, and that all who are not saved by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will go to hell. It does not matter if it is our children, our grandchildren, our great grandchildren, our mothers, our fathers, or our lovers. If a person has not heard the preaching of the Gospel and, repenting of their sins, has not turned toward Christ Jesus as Savior and Lord, then that person will spend the next life in a place of eternal burning.

May I illustrate it this way: we who are Christ's Body are to work together like firemen. The house is on fire, and its inhabitants are going to burn if we don't do something. We don't have the luxury of standing around commenting on the condition of the lawn and the shrubbery. We don't have the luxury of getting off course of the Gospel. We must work together as a Body united in Christ doing His glorious bidding. We live according to His pattern. We do according to the pattern set before us in the Holy Scripture.

When I was a young boy I used to help my dad in the upholstery shop. Dad was a master at recovering furniture. He could take an old sofa or chair and, with the skill of a master craftsman, he would recover the old with new fabric. The finished product often looked better than the original “store bought” item. Why? Because Dad worked according to a pattern. He meticulously removed all the old fabric from the piece he was working on. He would use the old fabric as a pattern that he

would trace onto the new fabric. The old was the pattern for the refinished.

The Church must operate according to the old pattern set before us in Scripture. The Christian must live according to the old pattern set before us in God's Bible. The unbeliever – following the pattern of this world – must see that pattern as empty and without value. Just as Dad could not use the pattern for a sofa to recover a chair, we cannot use the patterns of this world to restore our lives. We need to return to the old pattern of that old Gospel message. We who are Christ's Church need to present faith in Jesus Christ as the only hope that people have for joyous and eternal life.

### **The Christian Must Bear The Infirmities Of The Weak World**

I sat listening to the young evangelist as he railed against the Church. He spoke out against “Churchianity” with as much passion as some liberals speak out against “homophobia”. Both words, “Churchianity” and “homophobia” are words that people have invented to justify a poor Biblical world view. The God Who created this universe and all that is in it, the God Who spoke all things into being with the Word of His mouth, this is Person, this Chief Architect, is **not the Author of Confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33)**. He is not found in anarchy<sup>1</sup>. Where anarchy and confusion are *God is not*.

<sup>1</sup> The Church cannot tolerate anarchy. What is anarchy? Webster's Dictionary defines “anarchy” as: “**Want of government; a state of society, when there is no law or supreme power, or when the laws are not efficient, and individuals do what they please with impunity; political confusion.**” In short, anarchy is “whatever feels good to me, this I will do regardless as to what you think or feel”.

Our God is the Same God Who **brought light out of darkness (Genesis 1:4)**. Our God is the Same God who **made Adam and Eve, the pattern of the family (Genesis 1:27)**. This is the Same God Who **ordered that the Tabernacle be built “according to the pattern” He set (Exodus 25:9; Hebrews 8:5)**. Our God works according to a pattern that He has devised. We who belong to Him *must* follow His pattern.

Humanity must have a visible pattern to follow for proper morality and a proper way of life. *Things that used to be done in the dark are now being done shamelessly in the light.*

Not only that, but the children of Adam are proudly trumpeting anarchy and “whatever morality” as the way that things ought to be. In this post-modern world truth is viewed as a relative, fluid concept that can and should be changed to suit each person's preferences. The world has no pattern to follow *unless* the local Church *be the Body of Christ*. We who belong to Jesus must work together to present Jesus Christ to a lost and dying world. We who belong to Jesus **know the truth (John 8:32), and, continuing in the Word of Christ, we are truly set free**. The world will not believe the Words of our Holy Book unless they see us working *together according to the pattern God has given*. **Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners (1 Timothy 1:15)**. Those who have received this truth to themselves are saved (**2 Thessalonians 2:10**).

Those around us will not be saved until they see the

Body of Christ *being what Christ has declared it to be*. All pettiness, all opinions, all traditions contrary to the Law of Love and the Word of Life are to be put to the side. God's method to reach this patternless world *is His local Church*. The local Church is composed of believers, saved by faith in Christ, to whom *service to Christ and glory to God* is the only thing that matters. He is not just our Savior, dear ones: He is our Lord!

The world needs to see pattern of a unified Church, united under the twin banners of prayer and God's Holy Scripture.

Humanity is sick, and the disease that has possessed it is sin. The Psalmist said **“I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin” (Psalms 38:18)**. The world, on the other hand, says **“I have no iniquity, there is no such thing as sin”**. What did Jesus say?

**John 3:19-20** And this is the **condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. (20) For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.**

The world is sin sick – and loves the disease that possesses it. We who are the Body of Christ, the Church of the Living God, we are His Ambassadors on this

planet. As His ambassadors we **work together toward the goal of ministering to the sin sick and the lost.** The believer in fellowship with Christ is strong in comparison to the unbeliever. So we could apply our verse:

**FOCAL Romans 15:1 We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.**

to mean “**we who are strong because of Christ, who are light because Jesus rescued us, need to bear with the weaknesses of the world.** We who are saved certainly do not need to justify sin – the world needs to see Christ in us. Yet we also need to understand that the lost are still blind to Christ, blind to their lostness, and we need to keep on reaching out to this lost and dying world while telling them that **Jesus Christ is the only Way, the only Truth, and the only Life (John 14:6).** No person comes to God and receives salvation unless they come through the Door that is Christ.

We who are saved *must not justify sin* – yet we must understand that the sinner will never be healed without Christ. We are told in another place:

**Romans 10:13-14 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. (14) How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and**

**how shall they hear without a preacher?**

People must hear about Jesus. The drug dealer must hear about Jesus. The prostitute must hear about Jesus. The alcoholic must hear about Jesus. The homosexual must hear about Jesus. Those who are blinded by sin must hear two things: *first* that they are sinners, lost and undone, and *second* that Jesus is the solution to their lostness. For them to hear Christians will have to be uncomfortable. You will have to go against the flow. While others spend their time mocking the sinner and their habits, you need to lovingly pray for and witness to them. While other local Churches spend their time fighting over inconsequential things that will matter little a hundred years from now, you need to do the uncomfortable thing. Lovingly and with kindness each and every member of this Body of Christ needs to approach their neighbor, telling them:

**Titus 3:3-7 For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, [and] hating one another. (4) But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, (5) Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; (6) Which he shed on us abundantly**

**through Jesus Christ our Saviour; (7) That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.**

Do you notice how the Apostle witnessed? He said “**I was once like you, dead in my sins. Then Jesus Christ manifested Himself to me. I believed on Him, repenting of my sins. He washed me clean, and made me an heir of glory.**

The greatest witness you will have for Jesus in this lost patternless world is **how Jesus changed your life.**

It behooves us as God's Church to **bear the infirmities of the weak and lost world while telling them about Jesus!**

**The Strong Believer Must Mentor  
The Weak Believer**

**FOCAL** Romans 15:1-2 We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please<sup>2</sup> ourselves. (2) Let every one of us please<sup>2</sup> his neighbor for his good to edification.

The word “**please**” in our text is a Greek word which

2 G700, ἀρεσκῶ, areskō, ar-es'-ko, Probably from G142 (through the idea of exciting emotion); to be agreeable (or by implication to seek to be so): - please.

means to seek satisfaction, to do that which is agreeable, to excite oneself. Humans are creatures that love to be satisfied. We're always looking for a more comfortable place to be, a better place to sit, a more relaxed area to be in. We like good food. I don't know of anyone who would turn away from a slice of chocolate cake in favor of a kid's mud pie. That just doesn't happen. We like to be satisfied, to satisfy ourselves – and we will go at great lengths to do this. That's quite human, and quite understandable. But its also quite inappropriate in the Church. Why?

The Church of Jesus Christ is a **unified Body**. Each member in this Body has value, has function, has a common *goal outside of his or her self*. This is why our text tells us that **we are not to please ourselves**. We are to please the Lord. We have a mission before us to carry the Gospel to the world.

**How then are we to fulfill the mission that Christ has set before us? The answer is simple: the strong must mentor the weak, and the weak must grow in Grace.**

Christians who have progressed from the milk of the Word to the meat of the Word should be mentoring or discipling the weaker members of the Church. Every Christian should have as his or her goal the desire to

**2 Peter 3:18 ... grow in grace, and [in] the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus**

**Christ.** To him [be] glory both now and for ever.  
Amen.

How does a believer **grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord**? He does this by *faithful study of and practical application of the Word of God.*

The Christian who spends a *minimum amount of time in sin and a maximum amount of time in the Word grows in grace.* He or she becomes more gracious, more like Christ, more like God Himself.

The Bible says:

**2 Timothy 3:16-17 All scripture [is] given by inspiration of God, and [is] profitable<sup>3</sup> for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: (17) That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.**

Break this text down. **All Scripture** – the Word of God, the Holy Scripture – **is given by inspiration of God** – literally *is God breathed or the Breath of God* - **and is profitable** – literally *advantageous, to your advantage* – **for doctrine, reproof, correction, for instruction in righteousness** – how shall I be *instructed in righteousness? Only through the reading and study of*

<sup>3</sup> G5624, ὠφέλιμος, ōphelimos, o-fel'-ee-mos, From a form of G3786; *helpful or serviceable, that is, advantageous: - profit (-able).*

*God's Word.* That the person of God may be perfect **or complete, full grown, grown in Grace** – completely furnished to do all good works. The **strong or Christian who is mature** is the believer who shuns worldliness and *stays the course of righteousness, studying and applying the Word of God to their lives.*

**Illustrate** May I illustrate the Christian way of life using a parallel in this world? The newborn baby is fed nothing but mother's milk or some other suitable liquid nourishment. This child cannot eat a steak. Can you imagine taking a newborn and propping that baby up in front of a big porterhouse and a baked potato? That child can't eat. It must be fed milk *by the stronger until it grows in strength.* As the child grows at a certain point that child will be able to eat ground up foods, weak stuff that no adult wants to eat, but for the child it is necessary. Its little stomach and little body must grow. Teeth must form in the child's head so it can chew strong food. This illustration exactly parallels the spiritual world. The newborn Christian is not able to digest strong meat. That new believer – though he or she may be an adult in the physical realm – is but a babe in Christ. The strong in the Church are supposed to support that new believer, feeding him or her the sincere *milk of the Word.* The Apostle exhorts the babes in Christ:

**1 Peter 2:2-3 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: (3) If so be ye have tasted that the Lord [is] gracious.**

If a person is saved, **if they have tasted the grace of**

God, then that person should **desire the pure milk of the Word of God**. The strong should feed the younger. The Church only grows when there is a process of mentoring in the Body, with the stronger supporting and feeding the younger. The young in Christ *must be fed the good Word of God*.

### **The Strong Believer Should Always Mentor Away From Sin But Toward Christ**

**FOCAL** Romans 15:1 We then that are **strong ought to bear the infirmities<sup>4</sup> of the weak<sup>5</sup>**, and not to please ourselves.

The strong in Christ are commanded to **bear the infirmities of the weak**. What does that mean? Does this mean that we are to *ignore blatant sin in our members for the sake of love*? This is the way that many local Churches are going. If a member or a group of members wants to proclaim themselves Christian and *yet remain in their sin they must be corrected*. Yet the Scripture tells us:

**1 Timothy 5:20-22** **Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.** (21) **I charge [thee] before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these**

4 G771, ἀσθενῆμα, asthenēma, *as-then'-ay-mah*, From G770; a scruple of conscience: - infirmity.

5 G102, ἀδύνατος, adunatos, *ad-oo'-nat-os*, From G1 (as a negative particle) and G1415; *unable*, that is, *weak* (literally or figuratively); passively *impossible*: - could not do, impossible, impotent, not possible, weak.

**things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality. (22)**  
**Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure.**

This is very clear. When a local Church makes a decision to *justify sin in its members* it has violated God's Law and God's rule, and quickly degrades into anarchy. So **bearing the infirmities of the weak** does not mean **allowing sin free reign**. Sin is to be rejected from within the Body. Each member is exhorted to live a life pleasing to Christ. Yet we must at all times remember that the Body of Christ is composed of young as well as older members. The older members should mentor, disciple, and exhort the younger members. The older more mature believers *have an obligation to the Body and to Christ* to

**FOCAL** Romans 15:2 Let **every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification.**

The new believer in Christ does not understand the Christian disciplines. Young believers

- will not understand the importance of *faithfulness in attending the assembly of the Church*.
- will not understand the importance of *constant prayer and approaching God at the Throne of Grace*.
- will not understand the value of *reading and*

*studying God's Word on a daily basis.*

- will often place emphasis on the wrong thing, rather than on Christ's **mission (Matthew 28:18-19)**.

For instance, I remember when my children were young. When I gave my children new toys they very *often ignored the toy while playing with the brightly colored box.*

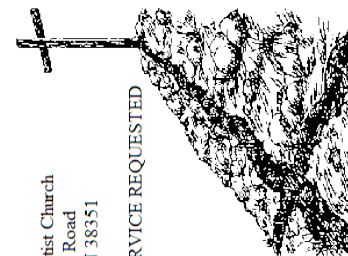
Young Christians tend to value the *physical* greater than the *spiritual*. They may place more emphasis on the building the Church is in, than on *building the Church*.

Jesus Christ did not die a bloody and painful death on Calvary for an inanimate object. He did not die in shame for a human ritual, a tradition, a title, or a denomination. Jesus Christ **came into this world to save sinners (1 Timothy 1:15)**. The Bible says that:

**FOCAL** Romans 15:3 For even Christ pleased not himself: but, as it is written, **The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.**

He died for our reproaches, for our sins. Christ gave His life that we might have life. This is what the mature in Christ understand, and teach, to God's little lambs.

May God touch your hearts with His Word.



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