

(15:1) - WE THEN THAT ARE STRONG OUGHT TO BEAR THE INFIRMITIES OF THE WEAK, AND NOT TO PLEASE OURSELVES. - The “*strong*” (mature) believers must exercise liberty in the use of indifferent things (such as eating certain foods) with love, patience, and wisdom in dealing with the weaknesses and ignorance of the “*weak*” (immature and untaught) believers. The “*strong*” must “*bear*” (pick up and carry the weight) and be patient with weaker brethren. Why is the greater responsibility given to the “*strong*” to have to carry this weight? The word “*strong*” itself tell us why. It is because they are mature in the faith concerning these matters. A weaker brother does not have the knowledge and strength to do this. As believers and disciples of Christ, we are “*not to please ourselves,*” i.e., live for ourselves. True Christianity is not a religion of self-centered people. We are not saved by the grace of God so that we can go through life for our own selfish desires and purposes. We are saved, first and foremost, to please and honor God and to reflect the love of God in Christ in our thoughts, doctrine, attitudes, and conduct. This would especially apply in our relationship to one another as brethren (*John 13:35*). We are to stand together in the truth against the world, and we are to make a concerted effort to promote the spiritual growth and unity of our brethren in the faith. Again, we need to emphasize that this does not apply to any notion of forgoing our liberty in order to feed the self-righteous and ungodly beliefs of unbelievers. We should use compassion and wisdom in dealing with unbelievers, but we should never do (or not do) anything that would promote their self-righteousness.

(15:2) - LET EVERY ONE OF US PLEASE HIS NEIGHBOUR FOR HIS GOOD TO EDIFICATION. - We are saved also to please our neighbor (speaking of our weaker brethren) “*for his good to edification.*” Pleasing our neighbor here does not mean we are to bow and give in to all the whims, fancies, prejudices, and personal preferences of all men, not even weaker brethren. We are not to flatter men, and we are not to engage in any activity or abstain from any food or drink in a way that would promote their pride, self-righteousness, or false views of salvation. This would neither edify (build up) brethren nor promote any sinner’s salvation. In the matter of weaker brethren, we are to receive them and bear their infirmities while being true witnesses of Christ, using every means to point lost sinners to Christ for all salvation, help weak believers grow in grace and in knowledge of Christ so as to establish the hearts with grace and thereby remove all thoughts that make them weak in specific areas.

(15:3) - FOR EVEN CHRIST PLEASED NOT HIMSELF; BUT, AS IT IS WRITTEN, THE REPROACHES OF THEM THAT REPROACHED THEE FELL ON ME. - Paul quotes here from *Psalms 69:9* to show the supreme example of Christ as one who “*pleased not Himself.*” Christ came to earth, suffered, bled, and died on the cross to please His Father (satisfy God’s justice for our sins) and to save His people from their sins. He died for our sins that were imputed (charged, accounted) to Him. Everything He did in this was for our eternal good in salvation - edification and preservation. We should certainly follow His example in these matters of Christian liberty. All that we do, we should do for the glory of God, the salvation of sinners, and the edification of our brethren. We are never commanded by God to put up with or promote any practice that would lead men to think that salvation is not totally by God’s grace in Christ. We are never to encourage people to think that our righteousness and holiness before God is anything more or less than the merits of Christ obedience unto death - His righteousness imputed. We are to let the light of the Gospel and the glory of Christ shine forth in all things, even in matters of Christian liberty (*Matt. 5:16*).

(15:4) - FOR WHATSOEVER THINGS WERE WRITTEN AFORETIME WERE WRITTEN FOR OUR LEARNING, THAT WE THROUGH PATIENCE AND COMFORT OF THE SCRIPTURES MIGHT HAVE HOPE. - The Word of God in the Old Testament was “*written for our learning,*” not only in leading us to Christ for all salvation and righteousness, but also to guide us by the hope of the Gospel in dealing with one another as brethren. Christ is our hope of salvation and our supreme example of love and obedience. Our hope in Him is the foundation and motive for all obedience to God. “*Hope*” here is the certain assurance of salvation, not based upon what we eat or do not eat, and not based upon the keeping or not keeping of certain days. It is the certain assurance of salvation by the grace of God and based on the righteousness of Christ freely imputed and received by God-given faith. This “*hope*” establishes our brotherhood in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ and draws out our love to one another in the faith. “*Patience*” is endurance in the faith of the Gospel and love of the brethren. It involves our perseverance in seeking not to please ourselves in these matters of indifference and seeking to please others in matters that do not challenge or deny the Gospel of God’s grace in Christ. This perseverance is the work of God within us by the Holy Spirit whereby God preserves us by the “*comfort of the Scriptures,*” i.e. being comforted in knowing that what we do in these matters is supported by God’s revealed Word.

(15:5) - NOW THE GOD OF PATIENCE AND CONSOLATION GRANT YOU TO BE LIKEMINDED ONE TOWARD ANOTHER ACCORDING TO CHRIST JESUS: -- We can look at this in two ways. First, God Himself is patient and longsuffering with His children in all our weaknesses and errors in these matters of indifference. God tolerates these things in His children and allows us time to be taught and to grow. We must understand that we cannot go further than God Himself goes in His Word. Many would apply this to those who deny or compromise the Gospel, but we cannot do this (*Rom. 16:17-18; Gal. 1:6-9; 5:1-5; 2 John 9-11*). This applies only to true believers who are weak in these areas of Christian liberty. God gives comfort to all His children, not because we eat or abstain from certain foods, and not because we keep or do not keep certain days, but because of our consolation in Christ. Secondly, our “*patience*” (endurance and perseverance in the faith) and our “*consolation*” (comfort and encouragement) are both gifts of God’s grace in Christ (*Php. 1:3-6; 2:12-13; Jude 24-25*). All the blessings of salvation are ours by God’s grace in Christ (*Eph. 1:3*) and not from or of ourselves. This includes our unity and fellowship in the things of which we are “*likeminded one toward another.*” Believers are to be of the same mind in the truth of the Gospel of God’s grace in Christ, in love to one another, and not let these matters of liberty upset our unity and fellowship.

(15:6) - THAT YE MAY WITH ONE MIND AND ONE MOUTH GLORIFY GOD, EVEN THE FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. - As true disciples of Christ, our goal should not be to promote ourselves or our own personal convictions, preferences, or prejudices. Our goal is to be unity and fellowship with our brethren to glorify and honor our heavenly Father through the Lord Jesus Christ. We are to do this in doctrine, in word, and in practice. There will be harmony and brotherly love among all who are persuaded of this same hope which is in Christ and by the grace of God. Those who are truly like-minded will see themselves as members of the one body of Christ, and though we be many, we will speak as one (one mind, one mouth) concerning God’s grace and faithfulness to fulfill His promise in our salvation conditioned on Christ alone. This glorifies “*God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*”