Difference Makers
Romans 15:1-4
Sermon Outline

A. They Strengthen the Weak (vs. 1):

1. **Strong, Impossible** – Those who are continually (‘are’) under the control of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:15-18).
   
   a) Paul sums up the discussion of this very sensitive issue by repeating the main emphasis of the second half of the discussion (14:13-21), and indeed of the whole (14:1): that the primary responsibility is on "the strong" to bear the burden of maintaining the harmony of the community.

2. **Strong, Impossible** – Those who are of the Holy Spirit can overcome obstacles by the strength of the Spirit.

3. **Ought** – What the strong do for the weak is continuously very necessary.
   
   a) Paul summarized the previous discussion (chap. 14) by saying, We who are strong (obviously in convictions and conscience) ought (pres. tense, emphasizing continuing obligation; its first position in the sentence underscores its importance) to bear with the failings (lit., “infirmities, weaknesses”) of the weak (lit., “nonstrong”). The strong ought not despise the weak; they ought to bear with them. Also the strong should not seek to please themselves. [1]

4. **Ought** – The strong are continually obligated to actively minister to the needs of the weak. Someone ministered to the strong when they were weak this is how they became strong (Ephesians 4:13).

5. **Bear, carried** – The strong need to continually bear up under the pressure and difficulties that comes from working with those in the church who are weak without complaining (Philippians 2:14; Colossians 3:13).
   
   a) "Bear" is not to be understood in the sense of "bear with" frequent in our common speech but in the sense of "bear up" or "carry" (11:8; Gal. 5:10; 6:2,5).

6. **Weakness, Infirmities** – Being an accusative (the direct object of the verb) bearing the weak means respecting the decisions they make because of their conscience and ethical obligations that cause them to struggle with accepting the freedoms the Word of God provides. Example may allow a person to come to church with what they have but they may believe that they have to dress up.

7. **Weakness, Infirmities** – These are individuals because of their conscience make decisions even though the Word of God allows them to do what they are struggling with. An
example eating vegetables only what God allows us to eat anything once we pray over it (1 Timothy 4:4-5).

8. **Without strength, impossible** – Those weak in the faith lack the ability to do what the strong, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit empowers them to do.

9. **Do not just please** – The strong must not continuously only do what please them. In order words if the strong is comfortable eating all kinds of meat they must not, knowing the weak only eats vegetables, bring only meat to gatherings. So the strong must continuously do only what is acceptable to them.

**B. They Put Others First (vs. 2-3; Philippians 2:1-5):**

1. **Each is to please his neighbor** – All the strong must continuously endeavor to do what is acceptable to those that are around them.
   
   a) 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 then enforces his exhortation by citing the example of our Lord Jesus who pleased not Himself.[2]

2. **For his good** - The strong must continually endeavor to do what habitually benefits the needs of the weak so that the weak mature spiritually.
   
   a) A believer is to please his neighbor for the neighbor’s good and for his edification. 3. The believer has his example in Christ, who did not please himself. Paul applies the words of David in Ps 69:10 to Christ. The reproaches which fell upon Christ are the evidence that he did not please himself.[3]

3. **Edification; building up** – (Ephesians 4:13) – Doing what is beneficial for the spiritual development of a weaker person is the purpose of bearing up the weak. Whatever the stronger believer continually does must produce a spiritually productive lifestyle.

4. **Christ** – Christ the anointed Messiah provided us an example of helping the weak.
   
   a) Christ did not please himself - He came to do the will of the Father, not his own will. This involved suffering and even death (see Matthew 20:28; Mark. 10:45; 1 Cor. 10:33-11:1; 2 Cor. 8:9; Philippians. 2:5-8).

5. **Did not please Himself** – Christ, not at any point or time ever did anything to render service that was sacrificing to himself.

6. **Written** – What Paul is quoting is being described as a word that is legislated by God and is unchangeable because it is decisively engraved in a set condition in the text.
7. **The reproaches of those** – These are individuals who made insults and created distresses for those who followed God. Example is obviously what too place with Christ (Matthew 27:27-31); another is the believers of Hebrews 10:33 who were made ‘public spectacles’ because of their new found faith in Christ.

8. **Who reproached you** - The veil insults, complaints and distress that was actively and continually placed on those who faithfully served God.

9. **Fell on Me** – Instead of the reproaches falling on the person being insulted it fell on God who allowed Christ to take it on for all of us (Matthew 10:22; Mark 13:13; Luke 6:22, 21:17; John 7:7).

   a) People insulted God, and it was those insults that Christ bore as he suffered for his people. Paul could have drawn attention to what is more significant, that Christ bore the wrath of God in bringing us salvation. But the wrath was not apparent to those who saw what was happening, while the insults were heard by all who were there (cf. Matt. 27:39–44).[4]

**C. They are Strengthened by their Faith (vs. 4):**

1. **Whatever was written** – To the degree that the Word of God has openly depicted how godly people were persecuted and how God allowed all of it fall on Him is an example for us. It must also serve as the controlling factor that guides.
   1. **Early times was written** - What was once and for all legislated by God is indisputable.
   2. **It was written for our instruction** - The words that were indisputably legislated has become doctrine.
   3. **It was written for our instruction** - The indisputable Word is in place to tutor us because it is the standard by which we must bear up those who are weak even if it means we have to endure insults and distresses. What was written is the authority that must shape our approach to the issue for caring for those who are weak in faith.
   4. **Through perseverance** – All the scriptures provide to those who are strong, being led by the Spirit, the direction they need to remain steadfast displaying courage in the midst of difficult circumstances enduring through the pressures these relationships create because the strong preserved in their faith. An example is a long distance runner who keeps a steady pace and keeps running no matter if it starts raining or the road gets difficult to run on. “This is a person who sticks to it when the going gets tough.”
   5. **Encouragement** – All of the Word of God comforts those who help the weak by the consolation it provides.
   6. **Might have hope** – These believers, who are strong in the faith, are continually able to hold on because the scriptures provide them the confident expectation that things will work out favorably for them.

   a) Hope in scripture is the confident expectation that God’s Word will come through.
   b) Obedience leads to spiritual growth, spiritual growth keeps hope alive.
   c) It is the Spirit working in us that keeps our hope for better circumstances alive.
d) Strong believers clinging to the Word demonstrates complete trust in God’s ability to provide success.


