

Glen Park Gospel Church
Tuesday Evening Bible Study Group Notes

Rev Chris Trinham

Studies in Romans Series 6

No 34

How to Strengthen One Another in the Faith

Scripture Reading: Romans 15:1-14

In every Christian Church and in every Christian home there are brothers and sisters in need of encouragement and help, not just because of the problems and illnesses that life brings our way, as it does to us all, but because they have not learned to trust in the Lord according to His word. Therefore they are rather weak in resistance to God, flaccid in their service and easily lured to the razzle dazzle of the world. How are we to help these people? What can we do to encourage and strengthen their faith and commitment to God. The short answer is that we can love them, just as Jesus Christ loved us and gave himself for us. Paul wrote about this to his friends in Rome. Their situation was a little different to ours, but the advice that he gave can instruct us too, if we apply the principles of what he told them to our situation.

The Strong are to Carry the Weak v1.

We have seen that Paul called 'the weak' those who relied on their scruples help them in their faith, causing them to categorise some things, innocent in themselves, to be wrong. 'The strong' where those who took God at His word and trusted in Him. The word for 'strong' is also from of the root word used in Romans 1:16 saying that the gospel is the power of God. The gospel occasions faith and faith releases power. The power is not in the believer, it is in the Lord, but because he believes strongly, the power of the Lord is in us strongly.

The word 'ought' in this verse more fully means 'to owe, be in debt or be bound by an oath' The strong have an honour obligation to the weak, and that obligation is to bear with their failings. To bear means 'to carry, tolerate, help or support'

This does not mean that the strong are to adopt the faith style of the weak. But it also does mean that they are to turn from them. How easy is it for us to say, 'Well, if that's what they want

to do, they can do it on their own.' If any do that, even for a short moment, we isolate them in our affections and are in danger of isolating them in our responses. We in our zeal for the Lord are creating a division in the body of Christ that God has not intended.

An example of this principle in action is when Mary broke a very expensive vial of perfume on the feet of Jesus to the annoyance of the disciples. Mark 14:3-9 'Leave her alone' said Jesus. It could have been translated, 'Forgive her' or perhaps, 'tolerate her', which is a better concept.

Emphatically, we are to act in love one to another, and that means putting the other first. This means that we must accept them with all their added baggage.

The Strong are to Please Their Neighbour, not Themselves v1&2.

The purpose of this is to build them up in their faith response to the Gospel. Paul put this principle to work in 1 Corinthians 10:32&3 where he writes:

Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God— even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.

To please someone is to act in their interests or to accommodate them. This is not simply a matter of men pleasing as such in Galatians 1:10 or 1 Thessalonians 2:4, but as an accommodation to a relationship. that exists within the bonds of Christ, in a way similar to that between husband and wife 1 Corinthians 7:33&34.

The word 'to please' is used three times, v1, v2 & v3 and tells the story. We are to not favour ourselves, but accommodate our neighbour; we do it like our example, Jesus.

Our ultimate objective is to help others grow in their trust of God and in their service to him. Therefore we learn to:

Be One in Heart, Like Minded v5&6.

Verse 5 is a benediction, a blessing.

Paul ceases his teaching and calls on God to bless his people with unity of spirit, of heart and praise to the Lord. Despite their differences, God's people can praise and worship together.

A benediction is a word of blessing in which one, often a recognised leader on behalf of God, calls down the grace of God upon the life of the receiver. Paul does more than urge his readers, he blesses them with a heart to Praise the Lord.

Accept One Another v7.

The word translated 'accept' has deeper associations than appears in this verse. "Take to one's self, assume, take as a companion or associate, receive kindly or hospitably, admit to one's society and friendship, treat with kindness."¹ Obviously then, to accept is to make a friend of the one in need. Implicit in these verses is the thought that apart from a need which the stronger believer can meet, there is equality as brothers and sisters in Christ. This need can only be fully met is a spirit of genuine reciprocated friendship. Then and only then can we take the next step. Faith will come only when the heart of another is open to receive encouragement, instruction and participation.

Counsel One Another v14.

To admonish is to counsel or teach.

The weaker believer can be strengthened in faith and built up in Christ. Counselling referred to in this verse is directed toward Christians helping each other grow in faith and mutual understanding of the word, will and way of God that have been discussed in these last two chapters. It does not say that Christians are qualified to be psychologists. There is always more for us all; more to learn, more to be received and more to enjoy.

Bible quotations in this study are from the NIV, unless otherwise acknowledged.

¹The New Analytical Greek Lexicon - Perschbacher

Welcome

Glen Park Gospel Church

Lower Road, Eltham North

Sundays 10.30 am

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