

Encouragement for the Journey

5.31.26

Romans Series

Message

Romans 15:1–13 (CSB)

15 Now we who are strong have an obligation to bear the weaknesses of those without strength, and not to please ourselves. ² Each one of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. ³ For even Christ did not please himself. On the contrary, as it is written, **The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.** ⁴ For whatever was written in the past was written for our instruction, so that we may have hope through endurance and through the encouragement from the Scriptures. ⁵ Now may the God who gives endurance and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, according to Christ Jesus, ⁶ so that you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ with one mind and one voice.

⁷ Therefore welcome one another, just as Christ also welcomed you, to the glory of God. ⁸ For I say that Christ became a servant of the circumcised on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises to the fathers, ⁹ and so that Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy. As it is written,

Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles,

and I will sing praise to your name.

¹⁰ Again it says, **Rejoice, you Gentiles, with his people!** ¹¹ And again,

Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles;

let all the peoples praise him!

¹² And again, Isaiah says,

The root of Jesse will appear,

the one who rises to rule the Gentiles;

the Gentiles will hope in him.

¹³ Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you believe so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Intro.

A. Have you ever heard someone say, “This would be a great job if it wasn’t for the people?”

1. Rural people are some of the kindest, most generous people in the world.
2. BUT, we have to have our space.
3. We want to see people at the Rodeo, at public events, and at church.
 - a. Then we want to go home and not see anyone.
 - b. We want to look out our back porch and see nobody.
4. I refuse to sit on my front porch if my neighbors are on theirs.
 - a. And I’ve noticed that some of them do the same thing.
 - b. I come outside with my book or laptop, and a cup of coffee, and my neighbor will get up and go inside.
 - c. It’s a glorious thing.
5. I can’t speak for the ladies in the room, but most men I know who work in the public with people are secretly dreaming of a job where we don’t have to talk to people.
 - a. I was talking with Dr. John Hood this week, and he is a great example...decades as an educator and administrator. Doctorate.
 - b. He has worked with thousands of students, parents, and employees.
 - c. He is now living his best life, driving a dump truck hauling rock.

B. I hear preachers make that joke often, but I don’t like it.

1. I understand it. But I don’t like it.
2. It’s true, but I don’t want it to be.
3. Here’s why:

C. Jesus didn’t come to Earth and die upon a cross so we can avoid people all of our days.

1. He came so that they might be saved, and He tells us to tell them this Good News.
2. That’s hard.

- a. Walking across the street, initiating a conversation, and praying over your meal in public are all hard.
 - b. Telling the world about Jesus feels uncomfortable and always has a cost.
3. The hard doesn't stop there:
- a. Loving the people who have given their lives to Jesus is hard too.
 - b. Trying to worship with people who aren't like me. Who don't like me. Who insult us. Those who worship differently from us.

The Obligation

Vs 1. Now we who are strong have an obligation to bear the weaknesses of those without strength, and not to please ourselves.

A. Paul recognizes that not everyone is at the same place or strength in their faith.

1. In Paul's day, the arguments surrounded what day to worship, whether to eat meat, and whether a man had to be circumcised.
2. Things haven't changed a whole lot today either.
 - a. A few things have been added to the list, like whether a person HAS to read the KJV version to be saved or not.
 - b. Or do women have to wear skirts and men have to wear long-sleeve shirts?
 - c. Far from being strengths, Paul actually calls these sorts of things weaknesses.

B. Paul says the believers have an obligation.

1. He says we must, we ought to bear the weakness of other brothers and sisters.
2. Bear means to put up with.
3. To help carry and share the weight with someone.

C. Here's how I picture this.

1. You're hiking in the mountains, and you're carrying enough supplies for a long weekend.
2. You get 2/3 of the way to your camping spot, and your friend or partner is really struggling.

- a. They want to keep going.
- b. You HAVE to keep going.
- c. But the weight, the climb, the altitude have all caught up with them.
- d. You are doing ok, but they aren't.
 - 1. Every step of theirs is more labored than the last.
 - 2. Their breathing changes.
 - 3. Daylight is running out.
 - 4. They are talking about quitting.
- e. You desperately want to make it to the camping spot for lots of reasons:
 - 1. You know this isn't where you are meant to camp.
 - 2. Maybe where you are at is too dangerous, too windy, too exposed.
 - 3. But you also know that the glory, the beauty, the splendor of where you are going is worth the struggle.
 - a. You know that the view of the sunset will be one of the most amazing sights in the universe. (PICTURE)
 - b. You know there are sights and sounds and experiences that are waiting for you if you can keep going.
 - c. But if you stop where you are at, you will miss it.

3. There are several options at this point.

- a. You could just leave them and tell them to figure it out.
- b. You could yell at them, calling it motivation when it is actually anger and frustration.
- c. You could push them down the cliff so they get back to the car faster.

4. Or, you could take some of the weight they are carrying and carry it yourself.

- a. You carry the weight so they don't miss out on the views that are only visible from the place you have picked out.
- b. You carry the weight because you don't want to turn back.

- c. You carry the weight because it is morally wrong and unlawful to push them down the side of the trail.
- d. Most importantly, you carry the weight because you want them to have a successful journey.
- e. You bear with them in their weakness.
- f. Instead of pleasing yourself, you take on extra hardship so that they might be built up.

Glory

A. Paul tells Rome, and us, to bear the weight of the weaker faith SO THAT God is glorified.

⁵ Now may the God who gives endurance and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, according to Christ Jesus, ⁶ so that you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ with one mind and one voice.

⁷ Therefore welcome one another, just as Christ also welcomed you, to the glory of God.

B. God isn't glorified when we make weaker Christians suffer.

1. Again, the weaker ones are actually the people with the most rules.
2. Believers who can't, in faith, attend services on Sundays or eat a pork rib without feeling that God is angry at them.
 - a. This has nothing to do with things that are obviously sinful.
 - b. We aren't even talking about the lost or those outside the church.
 - c. This is about those practices or laws that Jesus has fulfilled and satisfied, yet we like we must keep anyway.
3. When we add restrictions to grace and faith, we make the yoke of Jesus unnecessarily heavy.
 - a. It's like bringing your favorite pet rock on a hiking trip.
 - b. Why?
 - c. Because you feel like you can't journey without it.
 - d. But it doesn't make the trip better; it makes the pack heavier.

4. A lot of the weight we make people carry isn't for their sake, or for God's glory, but because WE OURSELVES don't know how to live without it.

a. Parts and pieces of religion accumulate in our pack, and we carry them throughout our journey, while expecting others to carry the same thing.

b. What does this look like in real life:

1. Julie was removed from a worship team in the early years of our marriage because she didn't wear dresses.

2. My Grandpa left the Church of God 80 years ago because he wore glasses, which to the leaders was an obvious sign of a lack of faith.

3. Rules like don't wear watches and rings, or women don't wear makeup.

c. The reality: People quit Jesus all the time because other Christians add weight to the journey that Jesus never required.

5. I know I'm a pretty strict guy.

a. There are a lot of things that I don't do.

b. I also have high expectations of others.

c. For example, I have what I call the Josh Kane rule: You can't wear shorts on the platform on Sunday morning.

d. Isn't that what Paul was warning about: No. For me, it isn't a salvation issue, but a respect issue. Josh is still saved, even if he wears shorts.

6. The Apostle Paul is not against high expectations, but He is against Christians who beat others over the head with sticks that don't matter.

God isn't glorified when we make weaker Christians suffer.

C. God isn't glorified when we celebrate the downfall of those who struggle.

1. People falling away is not new, and it isn't going away.

2. Social Media and access has made many of us more aware of the failings of other Christians than at any time in history.

3. So what do we do when that "so-called Christian" falls?

a. You should be grieved.

- b. You may be angry.
 - c. But you should never be glad.
4. Because our calling is to help build others up!
- a. Demolition is easy.
 - b. Construction is hard.
 - c. Finish work requires a special attention to detail.
 - d. I doubt any of us in the room are called to demolish other believers, but we are all called to help construct and build up.
5. Celebrating the downfall of a brother or sister in Christ is not Christian because it isn't Christ-like.

D. God isn't glorified when those who started the journey fall away.

1. Statistics are a funny thing, in that stats are pretty meaningless.
 - a. But when we give numbers a name, everything changes.
 - b. In a few weeks, we are taking teens to camp.
 - c. Statistically, if we take 20 students and bring back 19, we are a success.
2. But if I called and it was your favorite kid we lost, you would be mad.
 - a. In the journey of faith, not everyone we start with will finish with us.
 - b. But instead of saying, "good riddance, they were dead weight," we join with the sentiment of God, who does not delight in the death of even the wicked.
3. If there is someone in your life who isn't following Jesus right now, can I encourage you to pray for them, encourage them (in a real way, meaningful way), and to leave room for them to jump back in at a later date?

How does God help us to bear our weight, the weight of others, and finish well?

What does God give to help?

1. He gives us the Scripture. Vs 3-4

³For even Christ did not please himself. On the contrary, as it is written, **The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.** ⁴For whatever was written in the past was written for our instruction, so that we may have hope through endurance and through the encouragement from the Scriptures.

A. It can be a great comfort to know that God has walked with others before.

1. When we go on a tour, we want to have an experienced guide.
2. If you were climbing Mt. Everest, you wouldn't want some person who had never done it before.
3. Nobody wants their surgeon to say out loud, "Well, there's a first time for everything."
4. And no Christian ever has to walk this journey of faith without an expert guide.

B. This is why I talk all the time about reading all of the Scripture.

1. Notice that Paul quotes the OT several times in Romans 15.
2. And he says "what was written in the past was written for our instruction."
3. When our journey or someone else's journey is too heavy, we are reminded to go to Scripture and draw out the strength and wisdom that has been deposited.

C. When we go to Scripture, it gives us encouragement and endurance.

1. It's like keeping a protein bar in your pack.
2. When you are getting tired and weary, get some nourishment.
3. And you are not nourished if you avoid Scripture.

2. God gives endurance/perseverance and encouragement AND the possibility to live in harmony. Vs 5

⁵Now may the God who gives endurance and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, according to Christ Jesus, ⁶so that you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ with one mind and one voice.

A. This harmony has a purpose.

1. Because to be in disharmony is to be pulling in different directions.
2. And when we pull in different directions, we don't get anything done.
3. When we are shouting and arguing and not in harmony, the sound of our frustration overshadows the glory of God.

B. Working and serving with people requires endurance because people try our patience.

1. I know a lot of us want to run away to the beach or mountains.
2. The only person we want to see is the Amazon delivery guy.
3. But Paul doesn't tell us to hide, but he prays for God to give us endurance and GRANT us to live in harmony.

C. The answer for our world is not for the Christians to hide.

1. The answer for our church is to consistently and regularly pray for patience, endurance, and for a gift of encouragement.
2. Because our goal isn't to arrive to the destination by ourself, but to do it together.
3. I don't want to look back at a line of people I left behind because they were too weak to keep up.
4. Instead, I want to meet Jesus while bringing others with me.

And in the process, notice what God does.

3. God fills us with Joy and peace and hope and power.

¹³ Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you believe so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

A. When I read this verse, I see several things I need in my life.

1. If I was to describe this season of my life it would involve words like:

Complex

Busy

Tired

Frustrating

Wearisome

2. But I want in my life, probably more than anything else, is:

Hope

Joy

Peace

Power of the Holy Spirit.

3. If that is what I want, and what I'm feeling, I bet some of you are feeling that too.

B. This isn't a new feeling, it's an ancient feeling.

1. It's exactly what Paul prayed for the Roman Church to have.

2. It's exactly what the Roman Christians needed to handle the complexity of Rome and the messiness of their churches.

3. To love people, that don't look like them, talk like them, or worship like them, they needed the Supernatural encouragement and endurance that only the Spirit could bring.

Apply: Are we bearing the weight of others or are we adding it?

A. Too often, our lives are marked with the opposite of joy, peace, hope, and power.

1. Because we are not joyful, peaceful, hopeful, or powerful in our relationship with Jesus, we make others miserable too.

2. Or, we think to ourselves: I've made it this far, and they can too.

B. Many of us are designed to add weight while calling it motivation.

1. We yell, we give advice, we do all of these things.

2. There's a place for some of that.

3. But not when the brother or sister is down.

4. Not when they are ready to quit.

5. And in fact, I dare you to look at Jesus.

Romans 15:3 (NLT)

³ 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."

C. Jesus took what He didn't deserve because the weight of what we deserve would destroy us.

1. Why do we endure and encourage instead of telling them what for and walking away?
2. Because Jesus didn't.
3. How do we keep walking forward when everything in us wants to quit?
4. Through the help of the Holy Spirit AND the ministry of other believers.
5. Paul doesn't tell us to isolate ourselves, he tells us to help each other.

Don't quit before it's time.

1. Many of us in the room are dealing with a never-ending crisis.
2. Don't quit and don't keep walking alone.
3. Don't walk away from Jesus and don't walk away from the godly people in your life.

Take someone with you.

1. If you are in a season where you are feeling strong, look around and bear someone's weight.
2. Yes, they may be carrying too much of the wrong things.
3. Yes, they should have packed differently. They should have brought better shoes, better tools, and trained harder.
4. All of this may be true BUT deal with that later.
5. Shoulder some of their burden, intercede for them in the Spirit, encourage them, give them a call, bake them a pie, put \$20 in gas in their car, but DON'T let them stop this side of the destination.

Because what God has for us, the view from the place HE has prepared for us does not compare to our wildest imaginations.

As Paul said earlier in Romans: Romans 8:18 (CSB)

FROM GROANS TO GLORY

¹⁸For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us.