# Bearing The Infirmities Of The Weak

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

Bulletin VCRM44

5 November 2026

"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 neighbour 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" (Romans 15:1-3).

**Introduction**

Christianity is not a competition. The world teaches us to look after ourselves, protect our interests and ensure that we come out on top. Society often admires strength, celebrates independence and despises weakness. But the Gospel presents a radically different standard that the strong must carry the weak, the mature must support the struggling, and the spiritually strong must use their strength to serve others.

Romans 14 has dealt with disagreements among believers over doubtful matters. Paul now takes the lesson further. Christian maturity is not demonstrated by how forcefully we defend our rights, how quickly we expose another person's weakness, or how insistently we demand our own way. It is demonstrated by how lovingly we bear with others.

Notice Paul's language: "ought to bear", "not to please ourselves", and "for his good to edification". These are not suggestions for unusually kind Christians. They are obligations of Christian discipleship. The supreme example is Jesus Christ, who did not live to please Himself but willingly bore the reproaches of others. Our message has three parts:

1. The Responsibility of the Strong is to Bear the Weak.
2. The Purpose of Love is to Build Others Up.
3. The Pattern of Christ is to Deny Self and Serve.

**1. The Responsibility of the Strong is to Bear the Weak**

Romans 15:1: "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." Consider the implications and ramifications of this under these points:

**A. Strength brings responsibility, not superiority**

Paul says that those who are strong "ought to bear" the infirmities of the weak. The word "ought" speaks of duty, not convenience. The word "bear" conveys the idea of carrying a burden, supporting someone and patiently enduring difficulty. Spiritual strength is not a badge of superiority; it is a resource for service. If you understand Scripture better, use your knowledge to instruct, not intimidate. If you have greater faith, use it to encourage, not condemn. If you have greater financial resources, use them to help, not boast. If you have influence, use it to lift others, not crush them. Galatians 6:2 commands: "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

The test of strength is not merely how much weight you can carry for yourself, but how much you are willing to help another person carry. As an illustration, In Exodus

17:8–13, when Moses' hands grew heavy during Israel's battle against Amalek, Aaron and Hur supported his hands. They did not mock his weakness or demand that he prove his strength. They stood beside him until victory came. That is Christian fellowship. Sometimes the person who once stood strong needs someone else to hold up his hands.

**B. Weakness calls for patience, not contempt**
Weak believers may struggle with understanding, conviction, temptation or spiritual growth. Some need time to mature; others are recovering from past failures. Their weakness must not become an excuse for our pride. Paul does not command the strong to despise the weak, abandon them or force them to grow at our preferred speed. He commands them to bear with them. 1 Thessalonians 5:14 says: “Comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.”

**Patience does not mean approving sin or abandoning biblical truth**. It means correcting people with humility, allowing room for growth and refusing to treat their present weakness as their permanent identity. Consider a parent teaching a child to walk. When the child stumbles, the responsible parent does not shout, “You should know how to walk by now!” The parent reaches out a hand and helps the child rise. The Church must be a place where people are helped towards maturity, not driven away because they have not yet arrived.

**C. The strong must reject selfishness**
Paul adds, “and not to please ourselves.” Self-pleasing is the opposite of burden-bearing. **A believer who insists on his rights regardless of the damage to others has misunderstood Christian liberty.** We must ask not only, “Am I permitted to do this?” but also, “Will this help or hinder my brother?” Philippians 2:4 teaches: “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.” In the home, church and workplace, do not use your strength to make life easier for yourself at everyone else's expense. Use it to make the burden lighter for someone else. The first lesson is clear: God does not give us strength merely to stand above others, but to stand beside them.

**2. The Purpose of Love is to Build Others Up**
Romans 15:2: “Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.” Paul moves from what we must carry to what we must accomplish. Our responsibility is not simply to tolerate people; it is to help them grow. To achieve this, we must:

**A. Seek another person's spiritual good**
“Let every one of us please his neighbour” does not mean that Christians should become people-pleasers, compromise the truth or seek popularity. Paul qualifies his instruction: “for his good”. The question is not, “Will this make me popular?” but “Will this benefit my neighbour in a way that honours God?” Galatians 1:10 warns against living to please men rather than God. Yet 1 Corinthians 10:24 commands: “Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.” Here, wealth means another person's good or welfare. Biblical love seeks the genuine good of others without surrendering God's truth. Sometimes love requires encouragement; sometimes it requires correction. Sometimes it means speaking; at other times, it means remaining silent. Wisdom determines what will genuinely help.

**B. Build people up rather than tear them down**
The word edification means building up. Every believer should contribute to the spiritual strengthening of others. Ephesians 4:29 commands: “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.”

Our words should not leave people spiritually weaker, emotionally crushed or unnecessarily discouraged. There is a difference between exposing a weakness to humiliate someone and addressing it to restore them. The former feeds pride; the latter serves love. In Acts 9:26–28, the disciples were afraid of Saul following his conversion. Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles, explaining what had happened. Barnabas helped bridge the gap between a new believer and a suspicious church.

Imagine if Barnabas had joined the crowd in rejecting Saul. How much harder might it have been for the newly converted persecutor to be received? Barnabas used his credibility to build another person up. We should do likewise to defend the misunderstood where appropriate, encourage the discouraged and help others find their place in God's work.

**C. Measure your influence by its fruit**
Ask yourself: Are people becoming stronger in faith because of my influence? Are they growing in holiness, knowledge, love and service? Or do they leave my presence feeling condemned, belittled and defeated? 1 Corinthians 8:1 reminds us that “Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.”

Knowledge without love can produce arrogance. Spiritual gifts without love can become instruments of self-promotion. Even correct teaching can be delivered in a destructive manner. This does not mean avoiding difficult truths. It means delivering truth with the purpose of bringing people towards Christ, not driving them away from Him. So, before making a comment, sending a message or confronting a fellow believer, ask: Is it true? Is it necessary? Is it loving? Will it contribute to spiritual growth? An important lesson is this: Do not merely occupy space in people's lives; build something godly into their lives.

**3. The Pattern of Christ is to Deny Self and Serve**
Romans 15:3: “For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.” Paul concludes with the supreme example. We are not left to invent our own standard of selflessness. We are directed to Jesus Christ as clarified in the following points:

**A. Christ rejected a self-centred life**
“For even Christ pleased not himself.” The One who had every right to glory chose humility. The One who deserved to be served became a servant. Mark 10:45 declares: “For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” Jesus did not come to earth to maximise personal comfort. He came to fulfil the Father's will and accomplish our redemption. Philippians 2:5 tells us: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”

Christianity is not merely believing what Christ taught; it is allowing His character to shape how we live. If Jesus could humble Himself to serve us, how can we insist that serving others is beneath us?

**B. Christ bore reproach for the sake of others**
Paul quotes Psalm 69:9: “For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.” Jesus bore rejection, hostility, humiliation and the cross. He did not suffer because He was guilty of sin; He suffered to accomplish the Father's redemptive purpose. 1 Peter 2:21 says: “Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.”

Our service may not involve crucifixion, but it will sometimes involve inconvenience, misunderstanding, sacrifice and criticism. We may have to give time when we are busy, forgive when we have been offended, or help someone who cannot repay us. Consider the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:30–37. He interrupted his journey, attended to a wounded stranger and paid for his care. Compassion cost him time, effort and money. That is the nature of practical love: it costs something to carry another person's burden. Of course, Christ's atoning sacrifice is unique; we cannot redeem anyone by our own suffering. But we can imitate His selflessness in the way we serve those around us.

**C. Christ must be our standard, not our convenience**
It is easy to serve when we are appreciated, to give when we have plenty and to love when others are agreeable. The real test comes when service becomes costly. Jesus did not ask whether the cross was convenient. In Gethsemane, He submitted to the Father's will (Luke 22:42). Likewise, Christian maturity asks, “What does faithfulness require of me?” rather than, “What is the least I can do?”

This principle applies in marriage, parenting, church leadership, fellowship and evangelism. Leaders must not exploit the weak; mature believers must not despise beginners; and church members must not make personal preference the measure of every decision.

When self-interest clashes with another person's genuine spiritual good, let Christ's example guide your decision. Deny pride, surrender unnecessary preferences and choose the path of loving service. We cannot claim to follow the self-sacrificing Christ while living entirely for ourselves.

**Conclusion: Who Is Carrying Whom?**
Romans 15:1–3 gives us a demanding but beautiful picture of Christian maturity as follows:

- The Responsibility of the Strong is to Bear the weaknesses and burdens of others.
- The Purpose of Love is to Seek their good and build them up.
- The Pattern of Christ is to Deny self and follow the example of the Saviour.

The Church does not need more believers competing to prove who is strongest. It needs believers who use their strength to support the struggling, their knowledge to instruct the ignorant, their resources to help the needy and their influence to restore the fallen.

Remember: the strong are not called to make the weak feel smaller, but to help them grow stronger. Let us therefore examine ourselves. Are we carrying burdens, or adding to them? Are we building people up, or tearing them down? Are we following Christ, or merely pleasing ourselves?

The challenge is simple: stop asking only what others can do for you; ask what God can do through you for others. May our homes, churches and communities become places where the strong support the weak, love builds up the struggling, and Christ is seen in our conduct.

**Closing Prayer**
Heavenly Father, thank you for the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, who pleased not Himself but gave Himself for us. Forgive us for our selfishness, pride and impatience. Teach us to bear one another's burdens, to speak words that edify and to serve with humility. Give us grace to strengthen the weak, encourage the discouraged and restore those who have fallen. May the mind of Christ be formed in us, and may our lives bring glory to Thy name. In Jesus Christ's name we pray.

Amen.