BEARING THE INFIRMITIES OF THE WEAK, AND NOT TO PLEASE OURSELVES

Romans 15:1-4

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"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me. For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope". (***Roman 15:1-4***)

In our text apostle Paul listed two principles or instructions and the reason to put them into practice in our Christian life. The burden a strong Christian should bear in relation to the weak Christian and the need to condescend to even the weakest to build a healthy fellowship.

- We must bear the infirmities of the weak, ***Romans 15:1***. We all have our infirmities but the weak are more vulnerable to them than others. -there are those weak in knowledge or grace, slow to learning, dull in hearing, sluggish in decision making or even comprehending a simple admonition meant to alleviate the soul sometimes becomes a challenge.

Some belong to the smoking flax or smouldering wick category; is a metaphor for persons who are spiritually weak, exhausted, discouraged or barely holding on to their faith.

In the ancient times, oil lamps were made of clay and burned on olive oil using a wick made of twisted flax Fibers or cotton. When a wick burned down too low or charred, it stopped producing a clean flame and instead it gave off thick, pungent, smoke with very little light. Because a smoking wick was annoying, smelled bad, and offered no real use, remedial action is to quench or extinguished it completely pinch out the tip before lighting it back to produce a bright light.

We must consider these groups of brethren and not to trample upon them, but encourage them, and bear with their infirmities. Jesus Christ does not discard, crush, or give up on broken, struggling, or failing people. Instead of extinguishing them with harsh judgment. He is patient, tender, and

able to fan a tiny spark back into a full flame (***Isaiah 42:3, Matthew 12:20*** - the bruised reed and smoking flax).

If through weakness, the weak judge or gossip us, and speak evil of us, call us bad names, we must bear with them, pity them, and not have our affections alienated or withdrawn from them.

Regrettably! it is their weakness; they cannot help it. They need the strength of the strong ones to overcomes these infirmities. Same way, Christ bore with his weak disciples and apologised for them. But there is still more we could do - we must also bear their infirmities by sympathizing or be supportive to them, in relating ourselves to them, we should be ministering strength to them using the scriptures, as we have opportunity. This is bearing one another's burdens.

- We must not please ourselves, but our neighbour, ***Romans 15:1,2***. We must deny our own humour, in consideration of our brethren's spiritual weakness. Strong Christians must not display an act of indifference or dismissal attitude to the weak.

The design of Christianity is to build soul that has soft and meek spirit, that has compassion for the souls of others, to teach us the art of obliging or being helpful and to the true quality of being eager to please, polite and willing to go along with the plans and wishes of others that are in line with God's command. In as much as we are built with the willingness to please others, we are not servants to the lust or desire of any, but rather to the necessities and infirmities of our brethren— the main objective is to strengthen and edify them with a good conscience to overcome their infirmities and not to make jest of them. As we must not please ourselves in the use of our Christian liberty for our own pleasure, but rather for the glory of God and the profit and edification of others, hence, we should please our neighbour.

The instruction to please his neighbour, is not in everything, it is not an unlimited rule but for his good, especially for the good of his soul: not please him by serving his wicked wills, and accommodating him in a sinful way, or consenting to his enticements, or suffering sin upon him this is a dishonourable way of pleasing our neighbour to the ruin of his soul: if we please men this way, we are not the servants of Christ but please him for his spiritual good.--To edification, that is, not only for his profit, but for the profit of others, to edify the body of Christ, by studying to accommodate one another.

The reason why Christians must please one another: our Saviour Jesus Christ pleased not himself. The self-denial of our Lord Jesus is the best argument against the selfishness of some Christians.

Jesus Christ did not consider his own worldly credit, ease, safety, nor pleasure; he had not where to lay his head, lived upon alms, would not be made a king, did not seek his own will (***John 5:30***), washed his disciples' feet, endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, troubled himself (***John 11:33***), did not consider his own honour, and, in a word, emptied himself, and made himself of no reputation: and all this for our sakes, to bring in a righteousness for us, and to set us an example. His whole life was a self-denying and self-displeasing life. He bore the infirmities of the weak, ***Hebrews 4:15***.

He preferred our benefit before his own ease and pleasure. The scripture says, *"The reproaches of those that reproached thee fell on me"*. The shame of those reproaches, which Christ underwent. Whatever dishonour was done to God was a trouble to the Lord Jesus. He was grieved for the hardness of people's hearts, beheld a sinful place with sorrow and tears. When the saints were persecuted, Christ so far displeased himself as to take what was done to them as done against himself: Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? Christ also did himself endure the greatest humiliations there was much of reproach in his sufferings.

The sin of those reproaches, for which Christ undertook to - Every sin

is a kind of reproach to God, especially presumptuous sins; the guilt of all these sin fell upon Christ, when he was made sin, that is, a sacrifice, a sin-offering for us. When the Lord laid upon him the iniquities of us all, and he bore our sins in his own body upon the cross, they fell upon him as upon our surety.

Upon me be the curse. This was the greatest piece of self- displeasure that could be: considering his infinite spotless purity and holiness, the infinite love of the Father to him, and his eternal concern for his Father's glory,

nothing could be more contrary to him, nor more against him, than to be made sin and a curse for us, and to have the reproaches of God fall upon him, especially considering for whom he thus displeased himself, for strangers, enemies, and traitors, the just for the unjust, ***1 Peter 3:18***. This seems to come in as a reason why we should bear the infirmities of the weak. We must not please ourselves, for Christ pleased not himself we must bear

the infirmities of the weak, for Christ bore the reproaches of those that reproached God. He bore the guilt of sin and the curse for it we are only called to bear a little of the trouble of it.

He bore the guilt of sin and the curse for it we are only called to bear a little of the trouble of it. He bore the presumptuous sins of the wicked we are called only to bear the infirmities of the weak. Even he who was infinitely happy in the enjoyment of himself, who needed not us nor our services, -- even he who thought it no robbery to be equal with God, who had reason enough to please himself, and no reason to be concerned, much less to be hung on a tree, a shameful and sorrowful dead, for us, mere mortals. He pleased not himself, rather he bore our sins. And should this not challenge us to be humble, and self-denying, and ready to consider one another, who are members one of another?

We are encouraged consequently, that we must go and do likewise. *"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning".* That which is written of Christ, concerning his self-denial and sufferings, is written for our learning, he hath left us an example. If Christ denied himself, surely, we should deny ourselves, from a principle of sincerity and of gratitude, and especially of conformity to his image. The example of Christ, in what he did and said, is recorded for our imitation.

The scriptures are left for a standing rule to us: they are written that they might remain for our use and benefit. (i) For our learning. There are many things to be learned out of the scriptures. We must therefore labour, not only to understand the literal meaning of the scripture, but to learn out of it that which will do us good, better our lives and should we have need of help therefore not only to roll away the stone, but to draw out the water, for in many places the well is deep. Practical observations are more necessary than critical expositions.

(ii), that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. The scripture was written that we might know what to hope for from God, and upon what grounds, and in what way. This should recommend the scripture to us that it is a special friend to Christian hope. Now the way of attaining this hope is through patience and comfort of the scripture. Patience and comfort suppose trouble and sorrow such is the share of the saints in this world and, were it not so, we should have no occasion for patience and comfort. Patience works experience, and experience hope, which maketh not ashamed, ***Romans 5:3-5***. The more patience

we exercise under troubles the more hopefully we may look through our troubles, nothing more destructive to hope than impatience. And the comfort of the scriptures, that comfort which springs from the word of God is likewise a great stay to hope, as it is an earnest in hand of the good hoped for. The Spirit, as a comforter, is the earnest of our inheritance.

Conclusion

A bruised reed He will not break, and a smoldering wick He will not extinguish, till He leads justice to victory. {***Matthew 12:20, Isaiah 42:3***}. A bruised reed He will not break, Jesus ffulfils Isaiah's portrait of the Servant who receives the weak, wounded, and overlooked with mercy. After withdrawing from hostile opposition, He healed the crowds who followed Him rather than crushing those burdened by sin, sickness, shame, or despair. Human judgment often discards what appears useless, but Christ restores those who come to Him and a smouldering wick He will not extinguish, The Lord patiently preserves even fragile faith. He does not abandon the repentant, the fearful, or those whose hope has nearly failed. His dealings with Peter after denial, with the afflicted who sought healing, and with sinners who turned to Him reveal His power to renew what seems ready to perish.

In like manner we should bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.