

Romans (15:1-3)

If You Please

Part 85 – October 15, 2006

A CRUCIFIED LIFE

Q: Do you know who Stephen Langton is? Englishman; well-respected theologian; he studied at the University of Paris; died on July 9 ... almost 800 years ago.



Mr. Langton is the guy who, around 1200 AD, divided the Bible (including Paul's letter to the Romans) into the chapters that we still use today. So, thanks to Stephen we're in chapter fifteen.

But you should know that not everyone agrees with Stephen. In fact, *most* commentators agree that chapter 15 was *not* put in the best place ... it should've been set thirteen verses later. So, no thanks to Steve, we're actually still in chapter 14!



Q: Remember the lambs, the rams, and the shams?

The shams are arrogant Christians who stalk, attack, and devour any hapless believer who happens to hold different convictions regarding disputable matters.



The rams are strong in conviction *and* conscience: they know why they believe what they believe, and are careful not to violate it, nor to judge those who differ.



The lambs lean heavily on a crutch of religious rules, live their faith by man-made lists of do's and don'ts, and are easily persuaded to violate their conscience.

Today, Paul speaks directly to the rams regarding their obligation to the weaker, often annoying lambs.

We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me." - *Romans 15:1-3 NIV*

Q: You ever excuse your own impatience, or justify a bad attitude toward others, by saying or thinking something like: "They're so stupid (or) immature (or) inconsiderate!"

Well here's the thing (pardon me while I preach to myself), true wisdom, maturity, and consideration doesn't behave like that. So, what does it mean when I say and think these things? Have you ever heard of the pot calling the kettle black? Turn to someone and say: "Mornin' Potsie"!

If you have the ability to recognize what is stupid or immature or inconsiderate, then you are - to that degree - the stronger! The hard part is training ourselves to act like it!

It's not enough to be strong in conviction and conscience; we must also be strong in consideration for those who fail us.

We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak

- The word: "strong" (dunatos) means powerful or capable.
- The word: "weak" (adunatos) means fragile or incapable.

So, Paul is saying: "We who are [*capable*]" ... Are you *capable*? If so, you have an *obligation*; that's what the word "ought" means. We have an obligation to "bear". Interesting word; chosen quite carefully I'm sure. It's the same word used in John's gospel.

And [Jesus], bearing His cross, went out to a place called *the Place of a Skull*, which is called in Hebrew, *Golgotha*, where they crucified Him ... - *John 19:17-18 NKJ*

We, who are capable, are called not just to tolerate but to lovingly live a "crucified life" of *self-sacrifice*.

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. - *Matthew 16:24 NIV*

- People are transformed by acts of love, not criticism

IN THE TOILET

Not to please ourselves

This doesn't mean we're destined to be gloomy and grumpy. It simply means that we put the needs of others ahead of our own.

Q: You know how we baby-proof our homes to safeguard toddlers?

We who are adults are obligated to bear with the ignorance of toddlers, and lock cupboards, and put breakables out of reach.

This is not to please ourselves, but to protect our children.



When Shaz (my daughter) was little we had a hard time keeping up with her. There was the time she got into the Desitin; and the time she got into the Vaseline; and then there was the time she got into the toilet ... literally!

Parents get frustrated with their children; and there will always be times when we're annoyed with those who are more "ignorant" or "immature" or "inconsiderate" than ourselves. But we can't let 'em drag us into the toilet!



Paul could've said, "We who are strong, got it made! We've got the status! We're the rams!" But instead, he said, "We've got an obligation." Strength is for service, not status. We must act like loving parents, who purposefully deny themselves, for the sake of their young.

AIMING TO PLEASE

Q: If I asked the people around you, would they say they were *pleased* to have you as a companion, coworker, or neighbor? How would they answer? What would they say?

Each of us should *please* his neighbor for his good, to build him up

But, we need to be careful how far we take "people pleasing". Some folks suffer from the "disease to please"!

Compulsive pleasers camouflage themselves behind the cover of chronic "niceness," out of a debilitating fear of confrontation. Obsessive pleasers are not so much altruistic as they are addicted to approval, and desperate for praise.

Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ. -
Galatians 1:10 NIV



Paul is definitely *not* telling us to compromise our spiritual standards just to "make someone happy", or to "keep the peace". We must never change the gospel to please man, because when the gospel is altered, people are ultimately destroyed, not pleased.

- Pleasing becomes a sin if it works *against* God.

So Paul is very careful to clarify how we should please our neighbor: "for his good" (for his spiritual well-being - for the good of his soul); in order: "to build him up".

And the first step to constructively "pleasing our neighbor" is to work at eliminate our displeasing, destructive traits, like crabbiness, crankiness, and cruelty.

- Like calling people *stupid, immature, or inconsiderate!*

EVEN HE

Paul reminds us that Jesus is the prime example of someone strong in the faith, living for those who are weak in the faith.

For even Christ did not please himself

Listen to Paul's emotion: "For even Christ"

Even He who is infinitely wise and mature and considerate was gentle with Peter when he denied; and with Thomas when he doubted; and even with Judas when he betrayed.

Even He who is equal to God, allowed his purity and holiness to be covered with the sin of strangers and enemies and traitors.

- *Even He* - the Messiah - chose not to please Himself.

How absurd to call *Him* Master, and then impatiently lash out at fellow believers and family members who are simply not as wise, or mature, or considerate as ourselves.

- Let us measure *our* sacrifice by *His* sacrifice

And finally, Paul says:

"As it is written" which means he's quoting scripture.

And he quotes Psalm 69:9, a Messianic verse appropriately known as the "Psalm of the Righteous Sufferer".

The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me

The "You" is God ... the "Me" is Jesus.

"The insults of those who insult YOU have fallen on ME"

Jesus was so taken up with God's honor and glory, that whatever dishonored the Father, deeply troubled the Son.

We have no hope of becoming Christ-like people-pleasers without growing first and foremost as God-pleasers.