

Romans 15:1-3

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[0 : 00] Let's go ahead and pray before we start here. Jesus, we just are here to do exactly what the song just said.

! We're here to worship you. We're here to praise you. We're here to make much of you. We're here to understand more of your word and thereby be able to glorify you more in our life. We just ask for help to do that.

And we ask for your word to go forth in truth, Lord. And you said that you're going to have worshipers that worship you in spirit and in truth. Lord, I pray that the songs we sing would just aliven our spirits and just get us, Lord, in tune with just the Holy Spirit today and just listening and attentive and just able to focus.

And I pray that, Lord, these words would enable us to worship in truth. And, God, we would leave this place truly honoring and glorifying you more and more this upcoming week in our life and more ready to do that and to just take on whatever might be ahead of each of us.

We love you so very much. And I'm so very grateful for this opportunity. And I pray this would be done in your name. Amen. So, I've always kind of been a fan of the abnormal.

[1 : 09] Abnormal people, for sure. And so, a couple years ago, I actually watched this movie called Rain Man. Probably some of you guys have seen it. It's about this idiot savant who has this amazing ability to basically count.

And just for mathematics, and he just remembers numbers. So, his brother in the movie, Tom Cruise, actually uses him to go count cards in Vegas. And that's the non-godly aspect of the movie. But it kind of got me interested. And so, I actually went and looked up who this movie was based on. And there's this guy, a real guy named Kim Peek, who literally is an idiot savant and remembers 98% of everything he's ever read or seen.

So, he could quote to you any verse of the Bible on point. He can tell you every single county and every single state, every single area code. He memorized the Encyclopedia Britannica at the age of three.

He, he's just, it's an amazing, amazing mind that this guy has. It's fascinating to me. There's another idiot savant that I actually looked up. And this guy, he has, his skill is kind of in numbers as well, but also in languages.

[2 : 21] And so, for, and he has, he has more of like the ability to communicate. Like the, the, the Kim Peek guy can't really, he can't communicate hardly at all. But this other guy, he has more of the, more of an ability to communicate. So, he actually, in order to raise awareness for autism and for this idiot savant syndrome, he memorized the mathematical constant pi, right, 3.14 or whatever.

He memorized that to the 25,000th place and quoted it back in five and one half hours perfectly. I mean, it's just amazing, right?

I mean, just incredible how the, how the, that kind of a brain works. So, how is that relevant, right? I'm going to, I'm not going to twist that into the sermon. I mean, the Apostle Paul wasn't an idiot savant, but he was abnormally intelligent.

Okay? He was abnormally intelligent as a thinker. And his mind worked on a lot of different levels. Levels that you and I probably can't really grasp or get to. He himself, in fact, in his defense of his apostleship to the Corinthians, said, even if I'm unskilled in speech, he's like, I'm not a great orator. I can't really speak well. Even if I'm unskilled in speech, yet I am not so in knowledge. He was brilliant, right? And God used that brilliance of Paul to write 13 of the deepest, most inexhaustible books of the Bible.

[3 : 40] 13 letters, really. And Peter, in fact, no doubt, having recently read through the Paul's letter to the Romans, which is what we're in today, in 2 Peter 3, he says this, regard the patience of our

Lord to be salvation.

It's the patience of God that leads us to salvation, he says. Just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you. As also in all his letters, speaking in them these things.

And then he says, in which are some things difficult to understand. Right? So Peter himself is like, I mean, Paul's pretty deep. He's like, I've had trouble myself understanding. I've had to reread him myself, you know?

So there's an element of Paul in his writing that we're not supposed to necessarily grasp at first glance. And he's doing things with his intelligence in his writing that's meant to really kind of strike us at different levels.

So why is it important for us to understand why Paul is smart? Okay? Because smart people who are good teachers, and Paul was a great teacher, they tend to possess this one similar trait that I think I found.

[4 : 42] They drive home their points, not by stating and then restating the same thing over and over and over and over and over. It just gets repetitious. What really intelligent speakers and teachers do is they drive home their point by using synonyms.

By using different ways of saying the same thing. Right? That's what they do. And so, for instance, let me just give you an example. So, John Piper listened to this sermon. Actually, it was a radio broadcast a couple years ago.

And he was kind of answering this secular radio personality's questions about Katrina. And she came to the interview with John Piper basically just wanting to ask one question.

And she asked the same question repetitively throughout the entire time that they're talking. It was like 45 minutes. And she basically just says, how can bad things happen to good people? Right?

And so, John Piper, the thing that was so cool about it, is that when he responds, he essentially says the same thing every single time, which is, nobody's good but God.

He essentially says that same basic principle over and over and over, but he says it in like nine different ways. And so, at the end of the interview, like the radio personality is like, this was the best interview of all the people that we've talked to from different religions and different sects, whatever it might be.

[5 : 59] Like, you have really kind of communicated the most clearly. And again, it was just because he was saying the same thing, very simple truth, just through one or two or three or four or five, in his case, like nine different ways.

It was brilliant. And so, Paul does this all the time. He kind of, in a sense, what Piper did, so, was he takes the listener and he kind of convinces you that you're receiving something fresh.

You're receiving something new. But really, it's the same truth, just redressed. And that's what Paul is doing in our text today. He's taking the same thing he's been saying, that he always says, and as I begin to kind of cross-reference the passage today, it's amazing how often you see him communicating the same exact truth.

But he's just redressing it in a new way, in a fresh way. So, that's what we're going to look at this morning. And really, this is kind of what I wanted to say. Well, let's read our passage first, I guess. So, go to Romans 15 for me. This is, I was supposed to do one through six, but Nathan does not yet know I'm only doing one through three.

[7 : 05] So, we're not going to make it that far today. So, Romans 15, this is verse one through three. It says this, So, when I first started reading this passage, I really had a difficult time understanding what I was supposed to say, or how I was supposed to basically draw to this text something that's really not there, just at face value.

Because it seems pretty simple to me. Just, obviously, submit yourself to other people's consciences, other people's, you know, give preference to them, that kind of thing. But really, the main theme that he's trying to basically drive home, through not just this section of Scripture, but through the last three chapters, is this idea of unification, of unity in the body of Christ.

And it is a pervasive theme in Scripture. It's all over the Scripture. This unity idea. And it's literally, and I just want to say this at the beginning, I think it's the greatest weapon that we have, as a body of Christ, trying to bring the kingdom of God to bear on this earth.

Our unity, our oneness, our togetherness, on the things that we do, is so strengthening. Think about a family, right? We have some great families in here that are good examples of this. If you have a

strong family, right?

You have a husband and a wife that are together. You have children that respect and love their parents. You have parents that love and respect and honor and serve their children.

[8 : 50] Then you have this unit that really is, I mean, it's almost unbreakable. It's so, it's impenetrable in so many ways. And so that's exactly kind of the idea that I think Paul, and of course God, and through Christ, and through the words that God's inspiring Paul to write here, is trying to communicate, is we have got to be unified.

We've got to be unified. Okay? God is greatly concerned with the unity of His people. One author said it this way. By salvation, He has effected a real spiritual oneness.

He has created a commonness based on sharing the same eternal life, right? It's common to all of us. This reality of conversion should impact the life of the church by being the impetus for practical unity.

It's interesting because I didn't know what the word impetus meant either. So I was like, I went and looked it up. And the definition of impetus literally in the dictionary says, the force or energy with which a body moves.

That's what it means, right? So the conversion, our like-minded conversion, our oneness, right? And the idea that we're joined together in Christ is really meant to kind of drive us on and to energize us in our spiritual life together as a body.

[10 : 04] And I think that's, again, what He's really trying to kind of, He's using all these different ways of saying and getting to the point of we've got to be unified through the last three chapters. We're going to try to kind of cover some of that and make sense of it here.

We are together. The body of Christ, we are propelled forward in life and in our mission by a common force. That is, by our union with Christ. And it's our union with Christ that gives us union with one another.

That's what we have in common. It's Christ. That's the common denominator. And just like, kind of like two siblings, right? Who are different in every single way and yet they love one another because they have the same blood, they have the same name, they come from the same home, right?

There's just a certain union and bond that comes from being family. That's the same exact thing here. We've been ushered into the same bloodline as Christ. And so therefore we have to begin acting out our faith in that same way, together, instead of separate.

This is really, and let me just say this as well, this is really an idea that a lot of American Christians especially don't really identify with because there's so much emphasis put in our place in our society on individualism, on being your own person, your own man, your own woman, having your own relationship, whatever it might be.

[11 : 21] There's not a lot of, like in this time, like this day and age, in the first century, there was a ton of emphasis put on family because if you didn't have, if you weren't working together as a unit, as a family, you really were, I mean, you know, probably very poor, probably, you know, again, not really making ends meet, whatever it might be.

So there was so much emphasis put on that familial tie. And that's where he, I think, is really communicating well to these early Christians and we need to be mindful of that as well. So really, I think, the underlying theme throughout Scripture as a whole is unity.

Okay? This is the, like I know that we're conditioned to think it's redemption and it is redemption, but I think unity kind of is a synonym in this case. Think about it, right? Our first and foremost, our unity with God through Christ or redemption.

And then secondly, our unity with others, which is the second, right, and the greatest commandment. Loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and loving our neighbor as ourself.

So those are kind of the two unifying themes of the entire Scripture. It's gigantic. So I'm just going to read you guys some Scriptures here. Take notes if you want. I'm just going to read them off. These are just some verses that kind of identify this for us.

[12 : 34] This is when I began cross-referencing and finding all these different places that say it. So in Jeremiah 32, verses 38 and 39, God says this, They shall be my people and I will be their God and I will give them one heart and one way that they may fear me always for their own good and for the good of their children after them.

In Zephaniah 3, 9, God says of both Jews and Gentiles alike, I will give to the people's purified lips that all of them may call on the name of the Lord to serve Him shoulder to shoulder. Shoulder to shoulder, right? Like side by side, like brothers or like soldiers. So there's this idea of unity. I'm going to give them this new heart, this new idea of who I am, this new vision for Christ and then by that, I'm going to unify them together with one heart, one mind, one soul and they're going to become this powerful army, this powerful brotherhood, this powerful family that's going to overcome the wicked one, that's going to overcome the power of the devil, that's going to escape the perversion of this generation.

But it's together. It's all of our forces in one. Christ says it differently in the New Testament. He says in John 10, 16, I have other sheep, he's speaking of Gentiles, which are not of this fold.

I must bring them also and they shall hear my voice and they shall become one flock with one shepherd, right? One flock with one shepherd, united together. In other words, one author said the God's eternal plan is that all who believe in Him will become outwardly what they are inwardly, unified in Him through faith in His Son.

[14:20] Another one, Jesus, before His arrest, actually, He was speaking to the disciples. This is in John 17. It's the high priestly prayer. It's such a powerful text. So this is right before, I mean, the last thing Jesus is basically saying to the disciples before He goes to the cross.

He gets up and He basically prays this in verse 11 of chapter 17 in the book of John. He says, I am no more in the world and yet they themselves are in the world and I come to you.

He's speaking to His Father. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one as we are one. Right?

So what does He pray? He prays, God, make them one, make them unified as we are unified. He's praying for that. That's what His purpose is. That's what He wants them to hear.

And the last thing that He says, I want you guys to be together on this. I want you guys to focus on the mission, that great commission that I'm calling you to, together. It's powerful.

[15:19] And then of course, we got Paul's examples and this is all over the place. I started reading the cross references for Paul himself. To the Ephesians, he says in chapter 4, 1-5, he says, I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called.

With all humility, with gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Right? So what is he saying? I want you guys to be humble. I want you to be gentle towards one another. I want you to be patient. I want you to show forbearance. I want you to be strong for the sake, right, all for the purpose of being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

this theme is everywhere. He says of the Galatians, for you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. All of you guys are sons now. For you all who are, for all of you, wait, all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

There is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither slave nor free man. There is neither male nor female. You are all one in Christ Jesus. Jesus. It is pervasive.

[16:33] The last thing I will say to again drive home this point, Philippians 1.27, only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ so that whether I come to see you or remain absent from you, I may hear that you are standing firm in one spirit with one mind, striving together for the faith of one gospel.

Right? It is amazing. It is all over the place. So why is it so vital for us to be unified? That was my next question. Why is it so important for us to be together on this stuff? What does it mean for us? Why does God care? There is three, I think, simple reasons. The first reason is because the devil is a wolf. Okay? He is a wolf who strategically feeds on the sheep who stray from the fold.

That is the way the Bible paints a picture of him. He is like a wolf, right? He is deceptive. So, I lived with Clay Naylor for about a year, okay?

During which time, I watched more nature shows than I have ever watched in my entire life. And I promise you, this is kind of how it always goes, okay?

[17:45] Like when the one, you know, you or the one, you know, lamb, whatever it might be, the one straggler kind of gets separated from the flock, that's when the wolf or whatever, whatever the predator is, pounces.

It happens every time. Right? Every single time. And so that's the same idea. Like there's strength in numbers, right? Even dumb animals understand instinctually that I'm going to pray on the guy that's by himself.

Satan is like this, right? He prays on the people that are by themselves. So the first reason why we have to be unified together is because of your safety. As believers, we need to be protected by one another, which is one of the reasons why I think, you know, missionaries that are doing mission elsewhere overseas in dangerous places where fellowship like this is scarce, they come together in very unique ways.

I mean, like when you're under persecution, like the church of the scriptures was, right? Like when that initial first century church, they came together, they were so strong because they had to be unified because they knew they couldn't survive the elements themselves.

They had to be together. Okay? The more the devil can separate us, the greater his chances are of devouring us. Number two, second reason why it's vital for the church to be unified.

[18 : 58] Apart from outright sin, okay, adultery, murder, whatever it might be, apart from outright sin, nothing shatters the fellowship, stunts the growth, and ruins the witness of the congregation of Christ so much as disunity or disharmony among its members.

Nothing has greater potential to really ruin our witness as a church body than disharmony and disunity. I hate it when I hear churches have divided.

You know? I mean, I've heard that churches have divided over the color of the carpet. I mean, it's insane what happens in some of these churches these days. Satan has got them so twisted to think that these things are so important. I mean, like maybe, of course it's not the color of the carpet for us, but I mean, there's things within certain congregations very nearby that have tons of disunity as a result of peripheral doctrine.

Right? They're so hard-lined on certain things that they're not willing to even have fellowship with and enjoy a pleasant conversation with and encouraging Christ somebody that is of a different belief system on perhaps, I don't know, baptism or eschatology, whatever it might be.

And that just shouldn't be the case. It just shouldn't be the case. You know? So, I mean, Satan is very clever in how he does this and so getting us disunified is another vital reason why we have to be unified because Satan will definitely take advantage of that.

[20 : 21] Satan doesn't care about you and me. He doesn't care at all about you and me. He cares about shaming Christ through you and through me. Okay? So he doesn't care what it takes but he lays the temptations at our feet, right?

He tempts us, he tries to ensnare us in pride or greed or lust or envy so that he might strike a blow against Christ. Okay? Think about it this way.

The greatest way to enrage a man, the greatest way to really enrage a man is to go after his family, right? So he's not going to necessarily attack just Christ.

He wants to attack you, the people that Christ loves. He wants to attack his family because that's going to strike the greatest blow against him. Third reason why we have got to be unified as a body is because nothing strengthens the fellowship, stimulates growth, and purifies the witness of the congregation so much as unity among its members.

Okay? Just turn it on its side. It's the same exact thing as the last thing, it's just the opposite. The thing that the early church had going for them was a unique level of unity and all togetherness, right, that rose kind of above this persecution of the day.

[21 : 34] Nero was, I mean, coming down on these Christians as hard as he possibly could. He was lighting up his garden parties with, you know, burning bodies of Christians being crucified. It was an extreme time.

Extreme time. Right? And so, in the midst of all of that, the church, in that they kept, not only, you know, kept alive, I mean, they were alive for sure, but they were actually vibrant.

They were actually growing. They were powerful. They were becoming a force to be reckoned with. And even torture and that kind of stuff, extreme measures, couldn't even dissuade them from following Jesus. And that's because they had this unique union.

I mean, you can read about that. In fact, let's go ahead and do that. Let's go to Acts 2. Let me just show you guys exactly what I'm talking about here. Because, let's just, you know, like, I mean, they were obviously a great example of what it meant to be unified, so what characterized them?

What characterized these first century Christians that we need to emulate if we can? This is Acts 2, beginning in verse 42. And it says this, And they were continually devoting themselves to the

apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer.

[22 : 46] So they were always together. And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe. Many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together. And they had all things in common, right?

And it just keeps on going and describing more and more of that. Go over to chapter 4. Let me show you something else. I want to read verse 32 and 33.

It says, And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to Him was His own. But all things were common property to them, and with great power the apostles were giving witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all.

Right? So there was this sense in which they just, they didn't consider their possessions to be that, you know, like they weren't, it's not like I have this one thing that there's nobody in the world that can touch.

I mean, like if somebody needs this more than I do, money or my time, or, you know, if they need my service, if they need me to, you know, wash them or bathe, whatever it might be, like they were willing to go out of their way in that early century because there was such an example of this in the apostles, right?

[23 : 53] I mean, they had great leadership. They saw the apostles laying down their life, being beaten in the synagogues, you know, or being in the courts. So they were seeing, you know, them dedicate their time, their energy to praying for the people.

They were so focused on just setting that example for, you know, the way in which we follow Christ. And so everybody was following in like manner. It was beautiful. You know, so we've got to begin to set the example for our families, but also the example for our younger brothers and sisters in Christ, and also the example just for, you know, people that are coming up in the ranks.

I mean, just, you know, young people that are being saved, youth that, you know, we want to set a good example for how we should follow Christ and how we should really consider our possessions to not be that valuable as long as we can give glory to Christ if He requires us to give them or our time, whatever it might be.

We don't all have money. Some of us have just, you know, a listening ear, whatever it might be that you have to offer to the Lord. So this is what made them inseparable. It was just this unity with Christ.

It was beautiful. So anyway, that's just kind of an intro into the verses. I think that's kind of the foundation here, right? I'm not going to take up too much more time, but, you know, so that's essentially what Paul has been up to, okay?

[25 : 05] In the first three chapters, or in the last three chapters, I should say, 12, 13, and 14, he has been basically getting at this idea of, hey, let's just read the first part. Go to Romans 12 for just a second.

Let's just, I just want you to see where I saw this. So he says, in verse 1 of 12, I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God.

So he's like, hey, in light of your salvation, present your bodies as a living and a holy sacrifice acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what God's will is, that which is good, that which is acceptable, that which is perfect.

Keep on going. For through the grace given to me, I say to every man among you, not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted each measure of faith.

Then he says this, For just as we have many members in one body, and all the members do not have the same function, so we who are many are one body in Christ and individually members of it.

[26 : 20] Okay? So he goes immediately from this idea of, Hey, you have been saved by grace. You have been washed by the blood of Christ. You have been transformed by that.

You have been set apart by that. You have now inherited your joint heir with Christ. You get heaven. You get forgiveness for sins. You get separation from hell and separation from God is no longer a reality for you, right?

In light of these amazing truths, I want you to set apart your body as unto the Lord. Whatever it requires, whatever cost that means for you, I want you to give yourself wholeheartedly to Christ.

Then he says, Hey, I want to remind you though, you've got this body. And the way to really do this effectively is to be together and like-minded and to be one and to really enjoy each and everybody else's gifts, right?

Because that's going to strengthen you in your sacrifice of your own self to Jesus. It's going to help educate you as to how to do it better because you can see other people in your community doing the same thing, right?

[27 : 20] He begins to paint this picture so he goes into eventually, he goes immediately into this idea of like, you know, some people have these gifts and you know, they need to be serving in these ways. Then he goes into some more general stuff and he says, you know, hey, all of you guys should be devoted to one another in brotherly love.

You should give preference to one another in honor. You should, you know, be always diligent to do so. What else does he say? He says in 16 of chapter 12, be of the same mind toward one another. Do not be haughty in mind but associate with the lowly. Accommodate the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation but in the estimation of Christ, right? So he just, I mean, he's literally, he's saying the same thing.

You can see that intelligence of him, right? He's communicating the same truths but he's just doing it different ways so that we see it from different angles. And he's helping to drive home the same point, be together, be unified, be with Christ and the people of Christ.

So he just goes on and on and on and then eventually he brings us to 15. So here we are again at 15. Let's just reread it and we'll dive into the particulars of this passage. Now we who were strong ought to bear the weakness of those without strength and not just please ourselves.

[28 : 29] Let each, let each of us please his neighbor for his good to his edification. For even Christ did not please himself but as it is written, the reproaches of those who approached you fell upon me.

Okay? So in verses 1-3 Paul calls believers, calls all of us to please one another. Okay?

To be about pleasing one another. To give preference to one another. To accommodate one another. Right? To give you the number one spot and not myself. By following the example of Christ.

That's all he's trying to communicate. Please one another by following Christ's example. So let's read verse 1 yet again. Now we who were strong ought to bear the weakness of those who are without strength and not just please ourselves.

Those who are strong are those who are more mature in their faith. Okay? That's exactly what that phrase essentially means. It's who because of the practice and experience in their life with Christ have had their senses trained to discern good and evil.

[29 : 34] That's what characterizes the strong. They know right from wrong. They know the important things from the unimportant things. Right? They've been able to they've been learned how to detect that. They understand that they have liberty in Christ.

Okay? The strong do. They have liberty in Christ. You have freedom in Christ. Freedom from the old covenant. You know, freedom from the dietary system in their case. Freedom from the strict commandments of the Old Testament that were specific to sacrifices and days and festivals and all these kind of things.

But what they don't have and what you who are in here who are mature Christians do not have okay? What none of us have that are mature is the right to express those freedoms without regard for those without strength.

Okay? Without regard for the weak. Okay? In Christ you have a lot of freedom. I mean I've heard John MacArthur painted as simple as literally abide in Christ and do whatever you want to do.

That's as simple as following the will of God is. Like abide in Christ do whatever you want. You have so much freedom. You can choose what you want to do how you want to do it. But of course within limits it's not sin but all righteous things.

[30 : 43] But the reality is there may be some things that we have liberty to that not everybody in Christ feels a liberty for. Right? They don't understand that liberty yet. And so we what he's saying is those that are strong do not have a right to express those liberties without any regard for the weaker brother.

right? There's certain things that are unacceptable because so and so is in the room or because so and so looks up to you or because you have such and such a position in the church or whatever it

might be.

Right? Like I know for instance I know that Nathan has zero problem with alcohol. Right? I mean it's not a sin to drink. Okay? But he has said you know what because I know that that tends to have a bad you know I don't know what's the word?

Stigma. Yes. Whatever. A bad stigma with people. Therefore right? I'm not going to do that. And he has submitted himself he's submitted that liberty in a sense to us in saying I want to lead by example.

I want to submit that to you guys and say I don't want to do this for the sake of my brothers in Christ. I don't want to lead anybody to stumble. Because that may be a serious no-no for a lot of us that have had problems with drinking.

[31 : 58] Right? Whatever it might be. So we've got to be very sensitive here. Those who are strong then he says ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength. The word ought there is really interesting.

It's literally in the Greek it has the basic meaning of owing a debt. Okay? So when he's saying you ought to he's saying you owe the debt to your brothers in Christ to do it this way.

Another it kind of communicates owing a debt or having a strong obligation. Listen to where the same word is used. The same word is used in Hebrews 5.3 to describe the high priest's responsibility to offer sacrifices for the sins of the people.

That's how serious an obligation this is. Right? You guys not giving offense to a brother. You guys giving preference to a brother or a sister in Christ. It's got the same weight to it that the obligation on a high priest had to actually offering sacrifices daily for the sins of the people.

That is serious. That's very serious. Okay? So the question again that we really have to come with here is how do we bear one another's weaknesses? How do we bear one another's burdens?

[33 : 12] And there's just really three things I'm going to say quickly here. The first way that we actually bear one another's burdens! Is by not pleasing ourselves. Okay? Not just pleasing ourselves.

Look at the end of verse 1. He says and not just please let me read the whole thing. So now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves.

Listen to this quote. We have learned to deny ourselves. This was our first lesson. None of us lives to himself. This is a thing in which all the people of God are one.

They're unified in this idea he says. However they differ in other ideas and other things though some are weak and others are strong yet both agree in this not to live to themselves.

Not one that has given up his name to Christ is allowedly a self-seeker. It is contrary to the very foundation of true Christianity. We neither live to ourselves nor die to ourselves.

[34 : 13] We are not our own masters nor our own proprietors. We are not at our own disposal. Matthew Henry. Okay? Powerful statement.

Right? When you become a Christian I hope the first thing that you did was say I'm done with me. I'm no longer living for myself.

Right? The first thing that we learn first thing that Jesus says to do Matthew or Mark 8 deny yourself. Right? Deny yourself. What does that mean? What does that mean? It essentially means to give preference no longer to your own desires and ambitions but rather to Christ's desires and ambitions.

We give preference now to Christ's desires and Christ's ambitions and Christ's likes and dislikes. Right? So what is Christ's desire?

Christ desires oneness like he has with the Trinity. Right? He has this oneness. Right? So he wants to save people and bring them into himself for the sake of making them one.

[35 : 17] Entering them into a oneness relationship with them. That's what he desires more than anything. That's why he came to die was to bring us together. To reconcile us back to God into fellowship yet again.

Right? It's that oneness that God cares about. That unity that God cares about. And what Christ is ambitious for is more. Right?

More unity enjoyed by more people from more nations and more tribes and more tongues and more peoples. He's really about one thing. Relationship.

Unity. Togetherness with God. Right? He prays that. Go read John 17. And he's ambitious for more. Until he takes us away.

Right? He said, I want you to keep doing this. I want you to go and as you go wherever you are, I want you to make disciples. I want more fellowship. That's what he's about. Secondly, we bear one another's burdens not only by not pleasing ourselves or not living for ourselves, I could better say that, but by pleasing our neighbor for his good to his edification.

[36 : 31] That's what verse 2 says, right? Let each of us please his neighbor for his good to his edification. Very straightforward there. So many new believers, a lot of new believers, have very, very sensitive consciences, very sensitive consciences.

And this is by God's grace, right? They're new to it all, right? So they're uncertain of how to act and how to think, of how to carry themselves. And the last thing that you want to do, the very last thing you want to do, okay, as an older believer, as a more mature believer, the most ruinous thing that you could possibly do to a new convert is to teach them to ignore their conscience.

okay, it's a defense mechanism that God has given to each and every person in here, okay, for the sake of helping you to be protected from things that would for you be ruinous, okay?

And here's the beautiful thing about the conscience. The conscience is what gives each and every Christian in here variety. The conscience is really unique because what it does is it basically adds variety to Christianity.

So for instance, what may be permissible for me, what may be right for me, may not be for you.

What may be right for you, may not be for me. Right? There's certain things that may be just fine in the kingdom of God for you, but not so for me.

[37 : 49] And so what Satan loves to do is he loves to say, this is the one way that you must go. And there's no sense of variety in that, no sense of being led by the Holy Spirit in that, it's just a sense of following, it's going back to that old way of just basically following the leader and getting caught up in a lot of righteous doing and not a lot of righteous living.

Okay? So we need to stop judging each other based on this idea of the conscience. It's a very freeing thing to be able to listen to the Holy Spirit as a new Christian or even as a mature Christian and say, the Lord would have me not do this today.

You know? I feel like I need to really, I need to, for me, like this past, this morning, I'll be honest, like, I was like, I need to wake up early. I need to pray, I need to be with the Lord, I need to read the word, I need to prepare this, you know, sermon further.

Right? Now, it's a conscience thing. It wasn't like I have, the Bible doesn't say, wake up early when you preach sermons, but for me, it was, I needed to listen to my conscience, right? Other people, it's, you know, different things.

So the worst thing we can possibly do early on is teach a young believer to not hear the Lord, to not listen to Christ, to not listen to God. That is so ruining, so ruining.

[38 : 57] Okay? Let me just kind of paint a little illustration of how Satan works. He loves to disharmonize the church, and by doing that, what I mean is he likes to weaken the conscience of the church as a whole.

His best work isn't really done in forcing us to make a sharp left or right turn, but gradually veering us off our course until we just crash ourselves. He isn't doing this.

He's not putting things in your way so that you're going this way, then of course you have to turn that way. It's more like he just kind of gets you off a little bit, and eventually you find yourself in a place that you never thought was possible. You find yourself not reading the word for a month.

You find yourself not praying at all because you're too busy. You find yourself never witnessing again. You know, it's like, how did I, I mean, you look back a year and you're like, how did I get here? What happened?

How did I, you know, it's just, and that's that gradual just ignoring the conscience and getting veered off course. It's exactly what the devil does. Okay? He tries to be very silent in the way that he tempts, not overt.

[40 : 04] so the question just to kind of put it back on us, right? How many of us are backslidden? How many of us are ignoring our conscience?

Know the right thing to do and don't do it, right? I mean, look at what the very end of chapter 14 says here, 22 and 23. The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before, have as, I love this, have as your own conviction before God.

Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves, but he who doubts is condemned if he eats because his eating is not from faith. Whatever is not from faith is sin.

It's not about just doing something, it's about actually believing and listening to Christ and doing what he calls us to do. That's the idea. One other verse I wanted to quickly read you guys, and I promise you we're almost finished here.

Well, just take the note down. for 1 Corinthians 9, 19-22. It's the one that says, you know, he says basically for the sake of Jews I became like a Jew, for the sake of those that are under the law I became like those that are under the law.

[41 : 12] He just kind of goes back and forth and says that I do whatever it takes to basically submit myself to the consciences and the weaknesses of my brothers in Christ and sisters in Christ for the sake of winning them.

He has this end goal in mind which is to win them over to Christ, to convince them, to persuade them by his behavior, by his life, by his words, that Christ is beautiful and worth their time. And he's willing to sacrifice anything. And he even says at one point that if meat causes a brother of mine to sin, I'm never going to eat meat again. Like, I mean, I don't care what it takes. Like, I'm just going to be about the work of my Lord.

God, I'm just going to be prepared. Then thirdly, this is the last thing I'll say briefly. We bear one another's weaknesses and burdens by considering Christ. This is the greatest way, by considering Christ.

This is kind of our motivation. This is what fuels us. Listen to this again by Matthew Henry. He says, Even Christ didn't please himself. He did not consult his own worldly credit, ease, safety, nor pleasure.

[42 : 15] He had nowhere to lay his head. He lived upon alms, would not be made a king, detested no proposal with greater abhorrence than that of master, spare thyself, did not seek his own will, washed his disciples' feet, endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, troubled himself, did not consult his own honor, 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, self-displeasing life. He bore the infirmities of the weak.

That's the example of Christ, right? To us. He did this repetitively, laying down his life one day after the next for the sake of people. Paul says, I die daily, getting the same point home.

That's what I do. So of all the people that could have chosen to please themselves, it was obviously Christ, right? He had, of course, before even eternity passed, he had fellowship that was full, and that was completely happy in the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

He needed nothing. He lacked nothing. But he set all that aside, and he humbled himself, and he bore every possible burden, and every possible infirmity, and every possible weakness of sinful man upon himself.

[43 : 29] And he bore all of our sin, and our shame, and our weakness, that we might live to God. Right? That we might live to God. What does that mean, though?

What does living to God actually mean? It's doing as Christ did for you to others. Living to God is exactly the same thing as Christ, it's exactly the same, it looks exactly the same way that Christ lived.

It's doing exactly what Christ did for you to others. That's what he's called us to. This is the action of the gospel. This is what we do. This is the narrow and the hard way, it's the path that's less taken, but we must take it.

If we don't, then we're going to die in our sins, and our selfish life that we so loved here will tear us apart for all eternity in hell. There's nothing more empty than a life of selfishness, and there's nothing more full than a life of selflessness.

Christ came that we might have life and have it abundantly, it comes at a price, which is your selfishness and nothing less. That's what he asks of you, it's for your selfishness.

[44 : 43] That's what it is. As a church body, we're going to thrive and we're going to flourish together in unity only when we learn to be selfless toward one another, seeking to outdo one another and showing honor, right?

Truly and willingly bearing one another's burdens, be it monetary, be it emotional, spiritual, physical, or mental. So, let's just follow all in the words of Christ.

In Galatians 6.2, this is through Paul, he says, bear one another's burdens and thus fulfill the law of Christ. It's that simple. It's that simple. So, I'm just going to pray for us and we'll be done. Took up more time than I was hoping, but I told you it's only three verses, so there's no way I could have covered six. Let's just pray.