

Bible Study Romans 15:1-13

1. Recap from last week's study – what did it mean to have “weak faith”. Can you think of times when this has applied to you?

14:4 – God has accepted them, so they are saved. But in a certain area, in this case, eating meat, they do not feel free, eating meat troubles their conscience. The implications of the gospel have not fully liberated their conscience. So their faith is “weak” but it is still saving faith.

2. **Read Rom 15:1-13.** Paul expects that in any church there will be both those whose faith is “weak” and those whose faith is “strong”. What must the strong not do? Is this easy?

They are to bear with and ‘please’ others, even (especially) the weak, doing what will be for the good, not just what pleases themselves vv1-2 (eg eating whatever they like etc). If it were easy Paul wouldn't be commanding it! Our tendency is to think of ourselves first – only in Christ can that be changed.

3. Does v.2 mean that we just pander to the weak consciences of anyone?

*No. Pleasing them for their good is not the “good” that they might or might not think, but **the** good – God's good for them, which is to be strengthened in Christ **together**. This might take time to work out how to do it when someone's conscience is troubled by something. But notice too, the command here is for “Each of us”, which means the weak are also to please their neighbour too. No one is ‘pandered to’ – all are to consider others and help to build the church.*

4. Jesus is fundamentally our Saviour, a unique and vital role that only he could fulfil. But he is also an example for us to follow (cf 1 Peter 2:21). What two examples of Jesus does Paul call us to follow in this passage?

*v.3 Jesus is **the** strong one, and yet he exercised his infinite strength not in his own pleasure and comfort, but in obedience to the Father's will, sacrificed himself for the “good” of others. Where the gospel has set your heart and conscience free, it is not so you can indulge yourself in exercising that new freedom, but in considering how you can use it to build others (and the church) up.*

v.8f Christ exercised his freedom and strength to work for God's purposes – unifying one people for himself out of former enemies. And so we are to use our strength in trusting Christ not just to help an individual here or there, but to help an individual be part of the whole body of Christ – both in their local church, but also in grasping that they belong to the eternal people of God Rev 7:9.

5. What are the implications of v.4?

*Everything in the Bible – even the Old Testament! – is there for a reason; it's for us to read and learn from it so that we will endure and be encouraged in our faith. The Bible is indispensable to our faith **individually** but also **corporately**. It's there we encounter Jesus (by faith) so v.3, and so meeting him we come to put our trust in and obey him. The Bible is therefore what gives us **hope**, telling us of God's promises and his purposes for us.*

6. Work through the passage and note the references to hope and to glorifying / praising God. What does this tell us about the Christian life? Is it how we usually live? Perhaps this helps to define what it is to be “strong” (v.1).

***Hope** – v.4 – all Scripture is written so that, ultimately, we have hope! V.12 the plans of God through the OT was to bring the gospel to the nations so that they, with Israel, would Hope in him. V.13 God is the source of hope. As we pursue him, it's his desire that we ‘overflow’ with hope – the orientation of our life is to the future, to what God has promised but that which we don't yet have Rom 8:24b.*

***Glorify/praise God** – v.6 through endurance and encouragement we glorify God together. V.7 Accepting each other is so that we glorify God together. V9-12 God's work and purposes in the past have been to cause the Gentiles to glorify God. The orientation of our life is to be for the praise of God.*

The “good” of v.2 is the glory of God and our growing in hope of seeing him in glory. The “strong” in faith” must at least be those whose faith is oriented in this direction.

7. Paul offer two prayers for the believers in this passage, the first is vv.5-6, the other is v.13. Rewrite these in your own words and spend some time praying for your group and our church with these words. Perhaps commit to using one of these prayers regularly.