

# Romans 15:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

## Analysis

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**We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak** (όφείλομεν δὲ ἡμεῖς οἱ δυνατοὶ τὰ ἀσθενήματα τῶν ἀδυνάτων βαστάζειν, opheilomen de hēmeis hoi dynatoi ta asthenēmata tōn adynatōn bastazein)—Paul transitions from theological exposition (chapters 1-11) and practical application (12-14) to pastoral exhortation. The term opheilomen (we owe, we ought) indicates moral obligation, not mere suggestion. Dynatoi (strong) refers to those mature in faith who understand Christian liberty regarding disputable matters (food laws, holy days), while adynatoi (weak) describes believers with tender consciences still bound by ceremonial scruples.

**And not to please ourselves**—The essence of Christian maturity is cruciform self-denial. Bastazein (to bear) is the same verb used of bearing Christ's cross (Luke 14:27), indicating that bearing others' weaknesses involves genuine sacrifice. Paul's ethic inverts worldly strength: spiritual maturity demonstrates itself not in asserting rights but in voluntary limitation for others' edification. This principle governs all Christian community life.

## Historical Context

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Written circa AD 57 from Corinth, Paul addresses a mixed congregation of Jewish and Gentile believers experiencing tension over observance of Mosaic ceremonial laws. The 'strong' (likely Gentile majority) understood freedom from dietary

restrictions; the 'weak' (likely Jewish minority) retained kosher scruples. Paul himself belonged to the strong (14:14) but modeled voluntary restraint.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

## Study Questions

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1. In what areas of Christian liberty might you voluntarily limit your freedom to avoid causing a weaker believer to stumble?
2. How does Paul's definition of spiritual strength (bearing weakness, not pleasing self) contrast with worldly notions of strength?
3. What specific 'infirmities' of weaker believers in your church community might require patient bearing?

## Interlinear Text

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Οφείλομεν δὲ ήμεῖς οἱ δυνατοὶ τὰ ἀσθενήματα  
ought then We G3588 that are strong G3588 the infirmities  
G3784 G1161 G2249 G1415 G771

τῶν ἀδυνάτων βαστάζειν καὶ μὴ ἐαυτοῖς ἀρέσκειν  
G3588 of the weak to bear and not ourselves to please  
G102 G941 G2532 G3361 G1438 G700

## Additional Cross-References

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**1 Thessalonians 5:14** (Parallel theme): Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.

**Romans 14:1** (Parallel theme): Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.

**1 Corinthians 9:22** (Parallel theme): To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

**1 John 2:14** (Parallel theme): I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

**Romans 4:20** (Parallel theme): He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

**2 Timothy 2:1** (Parallel theme): Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

**Ephesians 6:10** (Parallel theme): Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

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