

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

We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak (ὁφείλομεν 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

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

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

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

Ὀφείλομεν	δὲ	ἡμεῖς	οἱ	δυνατοὶ	τὰ	ἀσθενήματα
ought	then	We	G3588	that are strong	G3588	the infirmities
G3784	G1161	G2249		G1415		G771
τῶν	ἀδυνάτων	βαστάζειν	καὶ	μὴ	ἑαυτοῖς	ἀρέσκειν
G3588	of the weak	to bear	and	not	ourselves	to please
	G102	G941	G2532	G3361	G1438	G700

Additional Cross-References

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.