

We who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength 《Ro 15:1-6》

Prelude: Actually, having weakness is not frustrating, for all of us who are born in sin have weaknesses; but what truly frustrates us is that no one bears the weaknesses with us, such that we can never walk out of them to become a strong man, and be used by Lord. Try asking: Can we see our own weaknesses? Possibly, a person with strong reasoning cannot understand a person who is fragile in emotions, until he himself becomes fragile; a person of faith cannot understand the limitations faced by those of insufficient faith; a gifted person cannot understand one who is more deficient in gifts and capabilities; an extrovert can hardly understand an introvert. Indeed, we cannot embrace if we do not understand; and we cannot support wholeheartedly and fill up the gaps of another person, if we do not embrace. Actually, when we talk about bearing the weaknesses of others, we basically are willing to help the weak to be strong again. But if that person remains unchanged, who is to blame? Is it because the weak does not have the determination and motivation to change, or we who are his brethren (or family) lack the determination to help him to the end, until he walks out of his weakness? In a congregation filled with the grace of Christ, we can hardly draw boundaries, for love is “patient” and not transient; love “never fails” and not having to come to an end; love “gives” but not defensive. We can ask: what more can we do to help a person to not fall, or even to be strong again? Let’s pray in this direction, only then can we increasingly understand Christ’s sacrifice. Actually, what’s most beautiful to a church redeemed by the Lord is not how the church is filled with visions, gifts, and vibrancy, instead, it is how the church embrace people with obvious weakness (the limitations of brethren, and the weakness of their will, emotions, and rationality), yet they bear each other’s weaknesses. How beautiful is this church in Lord’s eyes! Actually, there’re countless barriers between men, if not, <Ro 14> would not have discussed “disputable matters” – the barriers will not be raised and dealt with. Hence, when God instructs believers to love one another, His method is to call us to gather. In gathering, we bring out our differences and barriers, so that we can depend on the Lord to go deeper in reflecting and introspecting our love for one another. Certainly, if we think a church is not my cup of tea, we can choose to leave. But to leave does not mean we are coming out of our spiritual problems. We have not dealt with our self-centered nature yet, we only move on to a new congregation to start anew. But the intrinsic problem in one’s life will still surface as time goes by. Therefore, if we escape the problems we ought to face, escape from learning through brethren interaction, we will also discover this homework will lay over to our interactions with family. Eventually, we cannot grow in love, and are unable to understand the spirit of sacrifice for sinners which Christ had demonstrated.

1. We who are strong ought to bear with the weaknesses of those without strength 《15:1-2》

1) From principle, walk towards love to bring out the healing power of Christ

* Taking it as a whole, <Ro 14> talks about love from the angle of “principle”, eg: the man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not <v3>; eat for the Lord, and not eating for the Lord <v6>; make up our mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacles in your brother’s way <v13>; whatever you believe about these things, keep between yourself and God <v22>; everything that does not come from faith is sin <v23>. As we reach <Ro 15>, Paul’s concluding theme was to “encourage brethren to love one another”. After considered much in <Ro 14>, and having fixed the principles, eventually, we still need to act with genuine love from the heart. If we keep remaining in principles, love cannot grow. Principles initiate from “why do we need to love”, telling a person what is more important, what ought to be done, but eventually, a genuine love from Christ needs to grow. With this, the support of the strong will be more realistic, the weak will also be deeply moved, and strengthened. Often, we tend to stereotype people in this homework of loving others. For example, “sisters are more sensitive and meticulous, hence easily go into disputes; brothers have less of such problems”. This is partial truth, but brother also ought to understand that “careless and not caring” or “timidity” is an area where he has yet grasped how to love. Some people may assume, “the background or character of some people make it harder for him to love people, or more self-centered.” Of course, this is partially truthful, but we also need to understand that if that person is truly born with that problem, Christ has already shouldered it. Those with bad circumstances or interactions, we can also enable them to walk out of weaknesses through bearing each other’s weakness in Christ. In summary, after considering men’s conditions, we need to know how to act in love all the more.

2) The blind spots of the strong

* Actually, those who are strong often have a lot of fortes. Generally, they have faith, good reasoning, good living habits, and likeable characters. Hence, those who are strong will naturally exercise their strengths to deal with the rashness of the weak. Eg: force them, impose on them to accept their views, force them to do what they do not like, directly pointing out their mistakes or ignorance etc. Certainly, the strong have their good reasons for doing so; we cannot say they bear wicked thoughts. However, they may use their strength wrongly without them knowing. We need to know, in our fallen nature, there is always area of self-centeredness within. If we do not reflect, we may fall into the trap of safeguarding our own benefits, or use our strengths to be on the better edge at inappropriate times – these are mistakes easily committed by those who are strong. Although we do not do evil with our power, that does not mean we know how to use our power to do the right thing. For example, in a family, the father’s will and body are strongest. He may not use his strengths to abuse his wife and children, but do not take it lightly even it is so, for he needs to use his power to fill the gaps of the family, such as comforting the wife and encouraging the children. In the crucial moment, he needs to make crucial decisions, offering helping hand in times of weakness. Only then can the entire family be protected from the various winds and storms.

3) In particular, the strong should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up

* Certainly, what is said here is not the method that does not please God, only men. The purpose of the method that only serves to please men is to earn more approvals, but the purpose of we who seek to please our neighbours for Lord’s sake is to build their life (usually weak people), or supporting him discreetly such that he can be edified. Actually, the purest way of helping a person is to help in a way that he does not notice, and the person comes to realize it with time. The practical way of executing them are variable, but we will know that in a church, usually the strong can do this. For example: if you are a sociable person, you need to be careful not to use your gift recklessly to gather people on your side. Instead, you should try to integrate those who are less popular into the congregation, enable the unlikeable persons to be understood. If you are someone who talks well, do not try to take advantage with your speech, rather, use the skillful speech of yours to encourage others, so that people’s faith can be stirred and their conscience strengthened.

2. Without the sacrifice set forth by Christ's example, we cannot receive the will and strength to bear others' weaknesses 《15:3-4》

1) Christ did not seek his own benefit

* This tells us that, although Christ is Word became flesh, bears God's image, and has more rights than anyone to seek to please Himself, He did not do so. He did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness" <Php 2:6-7>. Indeed, it is so easy for men to seek to please themselves, for the flesh is limited, painful, in hardship, but our Lord did not seek to set Himself free from the pain of the flesh. Instead, He was willing to seek the greater satisfaction of walking in the Father's will. Our Lord Jesus has the complete divinity, yet He restricted Himself to exercise His divine power. He chose to listen to the Father, demonstrating the most esteemed goodness. There are many great people who do good in this world, but they cannot do as per God's will because they do not know God. Many strong believers, for the sake of seeking personal gains first, they cannot delight in what God has instructed them. Hence, when we talk about love, we need to learn from the example of Christ who listens to the Father.

2) The bible said this with regards to Jesus, " the insults of those who insult you fall on me" <Ps 69:9>

* When a person does not seek his but God's benefits, there will be many challenges ahead. This is because the world is always opposing God. Christ has taken the lead and enabled us to see that, when He did not seek His own gain, what He needed to bear was all humiliation and oppositions from those who opposed God's glorious name, will, glory, and plan. This is a practical example of not seeking personal gains. Hence, if today, we also do not seek our own gains, we have to be encouraged in our hearts through meditating on what Christ has endured, so that we can see God's glory and endure the oppositions from the people.

3) Christ embodied the Word of Bible in the life of those who have faith in Him

① The Bible is centered on Christ. Before Paul used the Scripture in <Ps 69:9>, he once again emphasized that all that is mentioned in the Scriptures are about Christ. This is also what Christ has said in <Lk 24:27>. We may use a lot of philosophies to explore God's Word today, but we should never lost the main character in the Bible – Christ. Because He lives, we can live through faith in Him.

② The Bible speaks to us concerning our era and realities. Although the books and letters of the Bible were inspired and written in those era, God's Word is living and active – speaking to us today, teaching us timely and through all things. Hence, when we meditate on God's Word, we must hear "God who has once spoken, is speaking now too".

③ The Bible helps us to transcend our present through the eternal future. Not only can the Bible instruct us, it also imparts wisdom to be saved and to do good; it comforts us, enables us to anticipate in present moment through looking towards the eternity. In particular, when we experience the transient and temporal hardships (we can apply this to the disappointment and pain which the weak brings to us), we can experience supernatural consolation and encouragement through the work of the Word inside us, such that we can take lightly of the present, longing for the eternity. Herein, the more hardship we face with regards to interpersonal relationships, through God's Word, we need to receive another type of eternal comfort.

3. Whether a church can glorify the Lord with one heart and mouth is closely related to the heart of imitating Christ by those who are strong 《15:5-6》

1) The God, who gives endurance and encouragement, gives you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ

* Often, we try very hard to correct each other's weakness, hoping to reach unity through it. But true unity does not come from having attained perfection in ways of dealings with people and things, but though endurance and encouragement given by God. Lets relook at what we have mentioned in prelude: a most beautiful church is not about the ferventness of vision or ministry, but helping each other in their weaknesses. Just as a marriage, surely there will be areas that can never be changed in each individual, yet the love in the Lord can cover these transgressions, demonstrating the glory of marriage instead. (Pastor's experience: as a church shepherd, I have shepherded many churches in the past 13 years. I have slowly come to realize that the weak nature of men are not something that can be healed quickly. This nature is a type of weak mindset, at times they manifest as fragile temperament, or unbreakable bad habits. Actually, their renewal and breakthrough (1) need time; (2) need the endurance, encouragement, and support of all brethren; (3) still require Spirit's intervention to set them free. Before the Holy Spirit intervenes, we still need to give people time and space to grow, until the Lord intervenes personally). Indeed, this is following Christ Jesus! Surely we must have thought how Lord Jesus trained His disciple in the 3.5 years, and in the end when He suffered, the disciples remained weak. Even after Lord's resurrection, they still remained doubtful, until Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon them. It was then that the disciples were Holy Spirit-filled, and experienced the unprecedented renewal.

2) Glorify God – the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ – with one heart and mouth

* Actually, each believer is different, whether in their conditions, backgrounds, or characters, and with these come the potential for divisions. But Lord is not asking us all to be the same, only seek to be same in one matter – following Christ. Despite our differences, we ought to seek unity in the mindset of following Christ, only then can we have unity in our hearts and mouths as we worship. What then is imitating Christ? That is, try our best to understand the weakness of brethren, and then accept their weakness. Not only so, the incarnation of Christ also tells us to go one step further to fill up the gaps of the weak, and see the example of Christ suffering for His people in our hearts, thus full of thanksgiving. Without the weak brethren beside us, we can never be trained in our spirit in this way.

3) Those who are strong face challenges, but great is the glory

* Although this message is a bit pressurizing to the strong (referring to those who are stronger in faith, equipped with wisdom and gifts, good in character and virtues). Perhaps, the strong may ask why do I need to endure such suffering? Why can't I also enjoy the interest, mood, or being given priorities like the other brethren? Why do I need to endure the pressure, or be shortchanged by others' weaknesses? Actually, God gives us a simple answer ① Actually, God put weak people among us so as to prevent us from entering into complacency, thus we can continue to advance in the matter of relying on the Lord. ② God has bestowed the strong with the blessings of bringing out the potential of the whole church. Indeed, when God gives more grace to certain people, the endurance and sacrifice the strong gives to the weak can determine if a church can be brought to another blessed stage. The weak refers to the babies in a family, they need the nurturing of their strong parents, until they can grow. Hence, when the strong is unwilling to do so, the timetable of the weak will be restricted. Practically speaking, when the leaders of church only care about their own faith in serving the Lord, ignoring the struggle of the weak brethren, not willing to put down themselves to edify and support their lives, the church will stop seeing new grace. May the strong ones in church be constantly reminded, see the important responsibility and glory.

坚固者当要担代不坚固人的软弱 《罗 15:1-6》

序论：其实，软弱并不困惑，因为我们与生俱来有罪的人都有软弱，但真叫我们困惑的是没有人担代我们的软弱，以至我们一生无法从我们的软弱走出来，成为一个坚强，也能被主重用的人。试问：我们看得到自己的软弱吗？可能，一个逻辑思维很强的人不能明白一个情感很脆弱的人，直到他自己脆弱之后才明白；一个有信心的人不能明白一个信心不够的人所受到的局限；一个有恩赐的人不能明白一个恩赐才能不够的人；或一个外向的人很能理解一个内向的人。确实，若不明白，我们就不能接纳；若不能接纳，我们就不能全心全力的扶持与补上另一个人的短处。其实，当我们说要担代人的软弱，我们基本的心态都是愿意要帮助那软弱者坚强起来。但若那人不改变，那错在于谁呢？那是在于软弱者自己没有意志力与上进心改过来，还是因为我身为他的肢体（或家人），我没有足够的决心帮助他到底，直到他从软弱中走出来呢？其实，在一个基督恩典充满的团契里，我们没有办法画出界限，因为爱是“恒久的”，不是暂时的；爱是“不止息的”；不是终究要停止的；爱是“给予的”，不是自卫的。我们只能问说：我们还能做什么来帮助一个人不跌倒，甚至是坚强起来呢？让我们继续往那个方面祷告，这样我们便能越来越领会基督的牺牲了。其实，一个主所买赎的教会最美的地方不是那教会充满异象、恩赐与活力，乃是因那教会有缺陷（有如不同肢体的有限或是信念、情绪与意志各方面的软弱），那缺陷纵然是众人能看见的，但那缺陷却是能被彼此担当。这在主眼中才是最佳美的教会！其实，人与人之间本有数不清的隔膜，但是若没有《罗 14》所讲的“疑惑之事”出现，那隔膜是不会被挑起，也不会被对付的。所以，当神嘱咐信徒要彼此相爱，祂的做法就是叫我们相聚，而在相聚中将我们的分歧与隔膜带出来，这当中我们才能靠主深入内心来反思与反省我们对彼此的爱。当然，我们认为一个教会不合我意，我们能选择离开，但离开不代表我们从自己的属灵问题走出来。我们可能还是带有自我为中心的本性还未被对付，只不过过去到一个新的群体重新开始，但是人生命的内在问题是过了日子又会浮现出来的。所以，有时我们若逃避肢体相处中当学习的问题，我们会发现这功课就被带到我们与家人之间的相处。最终，我们不能在爱人这方面成长，也无法深入明白基督为罪人牺牲的精神了。

1. 坚固的人应该担代不坚固人的软弱 《15:1-2》

1) 从原则走向爱，才能带出基督医治的能力

* 从整体来看，《罗 14》是多以“原则”的角度来讲爱，例如：不吃的人不可论断吃的人《v3》；吃是为主吃，不吃的是为主不吃《v6》；当定意不给弟兄放下绊脚跌人之物《v13》；你有信心，就当在神面前守着《v22》；凡不出于信心的都是罪《v23》。但到了《罗 15》，保罗是以“劝勉肢体们相爱”的说法来总结这整段的主题。当我们在《罗 14》已经考虑了多方面的情况，也设下了原则，最后人还是要能够以心中真切的爱出发。若只是留在原则，爱心是不能成长的。因为原则只是以“为何要爱的理由”出发，告诉一个人哪个重要，哪个该做或该不该做，但是最后肢体之间还是要生出从基督而来那真切的爱。这样一来，坚固之人的扶持才会显得真实，软弱者也因此会深受感动，得以坚强。其实往往，我们在爱人的事上也很喜欢将人规范，例如说：“姐妹比较敏感与细密，所以容易起纠纷，弟兄少有那类的问题”。这确实有部分的真理，但弟兄也要明白“粗心或不体贴”或是“胆小怕事”也是一种不懂得爱的地方。另外，可能有人也认为说：“某些人的背景与格性是叫他比较难爱人或是比较自我。这当然也有部分的真理，但我们也要明白若那人的问题是与生俱来的，基督已经担当；若是情况或人恶化的，那我们今天也能借着我们在主里的担代来叫他从那等软弱走出来。所以总而来说，当我们思考了人的情况之后，我们还是当更深入认识如何在爱中行事。

2) 坚固之人的盲点

* 其实，坚固之人往往会有很多优势。他们一般上有信心、思维有条理、生活有好习惯，也有讨人喜悦的格性。所以，坚固的人自然会有运用自己的优势来制服弱者的冲动。就例如：压迫他们、使唤他们接受自己的看法、强逼他们做他们不喜欢的事、直接指出他们的错误或无知、等。当然，坚固的人有他们所认为的正面理由，所以我们不能说他们是怀着恶意，但是他们有可能无意间会错用他们的力量。我们要知道，我们堕落人性的本能总是有自我中心的地方。有时，我们若不检讨，很容易掉入为自己的利益打算，要不然就是在不适当的时候利用自己的力量占优势，这都是我们坚固之人很容易犯上的错误。有时我们纵然能不使用自己的力量做恶，但那不代表我们晓得使用自己的力量来做对。这就比如说在家中一个父亲是意志与体能最坚强的。他也许不以自己的优势虐待妻子与孩子，但他不能以此为满足，他还需要以自己的力量来补上家人的需要，例如：安慰妻子，勉励儿女，在关键时刻做关键的决定，在家人有软弱中伸出援助的手，这样全家才能受到在各种大风大浪的保护。

3) 特别，坚固人要使邻舍喜悦，使他得利益，建立德行

* 当然，这里所说的不是那类不讨神喜悦，只讨人喜悦的做法。那类讨人喜悦的目的是为了得着别人的赞赏，但在此我们为主而讨人喜悦的目的是为了建立他人（通常软弱者）的生命，就是暗中扶持他，使他得造就也需要。其实，我们帮助一个人的最纯正方法就是能帮助他到他察觉的地步，唯有时间过了那人才知道。那实际的做法有很多种，但在此我们会知道在一个教会里，通常坚固之人比较能做到这点。比如说：如果你是很有缘的人，你要谨慎不滥用这恩赐来叫人站在你这边，乃让不是这么受欢迎的人能融入群众，让不可爱的人能受会众的理解；倘若你是很有口才的人，千万要记得不要以口才来占优势，乃要用口中的圆滑来鼓励人，使人的信心能被眺望，良心被坚固。

2. 若没有基督牺牲的榜样，我们无法得着担当他人软弱的心志与能力 《15:3-4》

1) 基督不求自己的益处

* 这句话告诉我们虽然那道成肉身的基督本有神的形象，也比任何人都更有权利求自己的喜悦，却不为自己的利益“以自己与神同等为强夺的反倒虚己，取了奴仆的形象，成为人的样式”《腓 2:6-7》。其实，人活在肉身时求自己的喜悦是多么容易的事，因为肉身有限制、疼痛、苦难，但我们的主却不求肉身苦楚的解脱，反倒愿意以听从父的旨意为更大的满足。另外，当我们主基督有完整的神性，却限制自己使用那神性里的能力，反倒选择听从父，他显出了最崇高的善。今天世界里有很多行善的伟人，但他们因不认识神，所以不能随从神的意思行事。就是许多坚固的信徒，因为先求自己的益处，所以不能满足于神指示他们做的。所以，当我们谈到爱的时候，我们还是当以基督听从父的榜样为首。

2) 圣经指着基督说：“辱骂你人的辱骂都落在我身上” 《诗 69:9》

* 当一个人不求自己的益处，乃求神的益处时，许多的挑战都会迎面而来。这是因为世界是与神为敌的。基督做了先锋，让我们看见当祂不求自己的益处时，祂所要承受的就是那一切敌挡神的圣名、旨意、荣耀、计划之人的侮辱与敌对。这也显示出那不求自己益处的实例了。因此，若我们今日也不求自己的益处，我们一定要反思基督所承受的，以此为自己心中的勉励，好叫我们看见神的荣耀而承受世人的敌对。

3) 基督将圣经的话活化在我们信奉祂之人的生命里

① **圣经是以基督为中心的。**当保罗在之前应用《诗 69:9》的话时，他是有意再次强调圣经一切的话都是指着基督而讲的。这也是基督在《路 24:27》所说的。可能我们今天可以用许多哲理来考究神的话，但我们千万不能失去整本圣经的主角，就是基督。因为祂活，我们能因信祂而活。

② **圣经带有神针对我们时代与实况所说的话。**固然圣经的书卷是写信人在他的时代向受信任写的，但神的话是活泼又有功效的，今日也向我们说话，按时按事教训我们。所以每当我们思考神的话当中，我们一定要听见“神曾经说话，现在也正在说话”。

③ **圣经以永恒的未来帮助我们跨越现在。**圣经不但能教训我们，使我们有得救与行善的智慧，也能安慰我们，使我们展望着永恒而得着今日的盼望。特别，当我们承受至暂至轻的苦楚时（在这背景也许能应用于软弱者带给我们的失望与苦楚），我们能因圣经的话在我们心里运行而生出一种超自然的安慰和勉励，以至轻看现在，盼望永恒。因此，我们在与人的关系越是有苦楚时，我们要从神的话生出另一种永恒的安慰。

3. 一间教会能否达到一心一口赞美主是与坚固之人效法基督的心非常有关系 《15:5-6》

1) 赐忍耐安慰的神叫你们彼此同心，效法基督

* 很多时候，我们一直努力纠正彼此的软弱，以此为达到同心的方法，但真正的同心并不是取得处事待人的完美，乃是借着神赐下的忍耐和安慰。让我们重提序论所提的：一个最美的教会不是异象与事工的澎湃，乃是彼此补助彼此的缺陷。这如同一段婚姻一定有两人一辈子无法改变之处，但彼此在主里的爱已经能遮掩那过错了，所以这反而显出婚姻的荣耀。（牧师经验之谈：其实生为一个教会的牧者，在过去 13 年牧养了这么多间教会，我慢慢已经明白人的软弱体质不是这么快能够得医治的。这体质有时是一种软弱的思想，有时是柔弱的性情，或是不能突破的坏习惯。其实，他们的更新与突破是 ① 需要时间；② 需要众人的忍耐、鼓励与扶持；③ 终究需要圣灵的介入使他得释放。当圣灵还未介入，我们还是需要给予人时间与空间来成长，直到主亲自介入）。其实，这就是效法基督了！想必我们也会想起主耶稣三年半培养门徒，到最后祂遇难时，他们还是软弱，甚至是主基督复活之后他们还是疑惑，一直到五旬节的到来，圣灵降临，门徒们被圣灵充满，才经历前所未有的更新。

2) 一心一口荣耀神 - 我们主耶稣基督的父

* 事实上，信徒各有不同，可能是条件、背景、格性都会有不同，而这些都是造成分歧的潜能，但主并非要求我们成为一样，但唯有一样的就是在效法基督的事上。纵然我们各有不相同之处，但只要我们在效法基督的思想上一合，我们的心和口就能在敬拜里合一。那么，何谓效法基督呢？那就是尽所能明白肢体的软弱之处，然后接纳他的软弱。不但如此，基督的道成肉身告诉我们当要进一步的补上软弱者的短处，然后在心中浮现出基督为子民受苦的榜样，以至心受恩感。倘若没有旁边软弱肢体的存在，我们根本无法受到这类心灵的操练。

3) 坚固之人有挑战，但也有极大的荣耀

* 这篇信息可能对坚固之人（相对来说信心充足，智力与恩赐也都具备，品德兼优的信徒）是一种非常大的压力。可能，坚固之人有时会想说为何我需要承受这些的苦楚呢？为何我不能像一般肢体有我的喜好，我的情绪，或是我的优先权？为何我需要因他人的软弱来受压力或受损呢？其实，神给予的答案很简单。① 其实，神将软弱者放在我们当中是为了要避免我们的生命进入自满的状态，而能在信主靠主的事上继续前进。② 神也将那带出全体教会潜能的祝福给予坚固的人。确实，当神施恩给某些人有如此的恩典，他为软弱者的忍耐与牺牲会断定那教会能否会被带到另一个蒙恩的阶层。软弱之人就如同一个家庭的婴孩，他需要被坚固的父母来养育，直到他长成。所以，当那坚固的不愿意这么做，那软弱者成长的时间表就会被限制了。实际而言，若教会的领袖们只顾自己有信心跟从侍奉主，但不理会下面比较软弱的肢体们的挣扎，也不愿意委身与造就和扶持他们的生命，教会也就无法再看见新恩了。愿教会的坚固者常常被提醒，看见自己的重任与荣耀。

