***Help the Weaker Christians
RO180-02***

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Please open your Bibles to Romans 15:1-6. Our subject is "The Spirit of Christ."

**Weak Christians**

In Romans 15, you will notice that the apostle Paul is really continuing the subject that he's been dealing with at the end of chapter 14 about the relationship between strong and weak Christians. Romans 14 concludes with verse 23, warning the weak Christian not to violate his conscience. Romans chapter 15 begins with a call to the strong Christian to help the weak brother overcome his unbiblical scruples. Most church people are poorly taught in the Word of God. You don't have to visit among Christians very long before that becomes clearly evident. Many of these church people are, in fact, lost, and they're on their way to the lake of fire. Many are saved, but they are devoid of all knowledge of doctrine. Many are more loyal to a denomination and its particular creed than they are to God and His Word, the Bible. Such Christians, consequently, are very stubborn in their doctrinal errors, and in their fanatical devotion to legalisms. They are what the Bible refers to as the weak Christian. And that is a tough person to deal with if you've gone on in the Christian life, and you have a perspective and an understanding to be a mature Christian. And then to listen to some shallow, immature believer carrying on is like listening to a child babble authoritatively about something that he knows nothing about.

**Grace vs. the Law**

Well, what chapter 15 deals with is to stress further the obligation of a strong Christian to the weak brother. Verse 1 of chapter 15 says, "Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength, and not just please ourselves." The word "now" introduces a word of explanation. And in the Greek Bible, the word "we" is put in separately. It's not just part of the verb. And the reason for that is to stress that this is applying to the strong Christian group: "We who are strong." The word "strong" looks like this in the Greek Bible. It is the word "dunatos." The Christian who is spiritually mature is in that condition because he has received training in the Word of God fundamentally and basically from his pastor-teacher. This training enables him to understand the vast difference between the way of life of Judaism under the Mosaic Law, and the way of life of Christianity under the grace age of the church. And there is a big difference.

There are some very well trained theologians who have not learned this difference. They think that there is no difference between Israel and the church. So, they bring in all of the Jewish system into the church age. One of the largest churches in the Dallas Metroplex has a pastor who is world-famous. He will stand up before his congregation on what he calls "his tithing Sunday." And he will preach a pulpit-pounding sermon about the Christian obligation to tithe his income to the work of God. And if you were to ask him where in the New Testament writings that obligation is placed upon Christians, he would not be able to show you any place, and he would admit to you that he gets it from the Old Testament. You might ask him, "How can you apply Old Testament requirements of Judaism to the freedoms of Christianity?" And I don't know what he'd say, because it is inconsistent, and if you keep doing that, you have created the monstrous religious denominations that we have today that are ritualistic to the core; ceremonial; and, totally meaningless.

So, strong Christians are people who have learned the difference, first of all, between Israel and the church. You understand the difference between living under the Law system and living under the grace system. This kind of a Christian has a deep appreciation for the freedoms which he enjoys as a church-age believer through Jesus Christ. We say that he is grace-oriented.

Now, this big difference is illustrated here in our context by the apostle Paul with the example that he has been using in chapter 14 about Old Testament rules, and about certain foods and drinks, which are no longer applicable in the age of grace. These words "we who are strong" is not an expression of arrogance by the apostle Paul. You might think that he's putting on airs there, but he is not. He's recognizing a fact of life as you should, indeed. This is the category of believers, in fact, to which all Christians should belong. There should not be any wimps and weaklings within the Christian community. Those who are trained in Bible doctrine cannot help but be aware of their mature insights in life. As you listen to shallow Christians, and as you listen to those who are untaught, you cannot help but aware of your training and knowledge of the Word of God. The strong Christian has a grasp on reality. Therefore, he knows how God works.

In any sizable local congregation, there will be a distinct division between weak and strong Christians. The apostle Paul includes himself in the strong category of Christians – those who understand the vast and distinct difference between God's plan for Israel and God's plan for the church. Therefore, Paul says, "I don't have these hangups about Old Testament rules that no longer apply to me as a Christian." But having said that, the apostle Paul says, "We do have to treat the weak Christian, who does have those hangups, with a tender hand. And we, therefore, have a certain duty and an obligation toward him."

**An Obligation**

He says, "We who are in this category of strong, informed, educated, doctrinally-instructed believers, we ought to bear the weaknesses." The word "ought" is the Greek word "opheilo." This word connotes an obligation. It is, in the Greek language, in the present tense, which means that this is the constant duty of every Christian. It is not a sometime thing. You have this obligation all the time. It is in the active voice, which means that it is done by mature Christians themselves. It's indicative mood – a statement of fact. The word stands first in the Greek sentence in the Greek Bible, which tells you that this is the important thing that God the Holy Spirit wants you to look at – an obligation. The first thing he pops at you at the opening of chapter 15 is obligation. We ought to do something.

**A Duty**

The idea is a duty which one has before God. And what is that duty? To bear something. The Greek word is "bastazo." This word means "to carry along." It actually connotes taking up and carrying a burden with someone until it is removed. It is present tense. This is your constant duty – to carry the weak Christian along. It is active. You do it yourself as a strong Christian. Don't hand him off to other believers. And it's in the infinitive mood, which tells us in the Greek Bible that this is God's divine purpose. God is telling you that it is His purpose for you to fulfill your duty, as a mature Christian, to carry those who do not have your maturity.

**Bear the Weaknesses of the Weak Christians**

However, I want you to realize that this word means more than just tolerating the foolish hangups of the weak with a good humor. You might be tempted to think that this word "bear," with the weaknesses of our weaker brothers, means to just tolerate with a good attitude his foolishness. But that isn't what this word means. It has a greater meaning than that. It means to help the weak Christian discard his misconceptions about the Christian life. It means actually to get under the load of this brother's lack of grace orientation, and to try to get it off of him. That's a totally different picture. To bear with the weakness of your brother is to get under his weakness, and try to get it off of him. It's to help the weak to deal with his spiritual immaturity so that he will become strong.

This word is used over 25 times in the New Testament. I'll give you a few examples to give you a perspective on what it means. In John 19:17, we read about Jesus bearing His cross. It uses this same word "bastazo" – getting under the load of His cross.

In Luke 7:14, we read about a group of men who are the bearers of a coffin. They are under the load of carrying the coffin.

In Mark 14:13, we have this word used as carrying a pitcher of water – getting under the load of a pitcher of water.

In John 10:31, this word is used in the phrase of "took up stones." They took up stones in order to attack Jesus under the load of the stones.

Acts 15:20 speaks about bearing a yoke – bearing the yoke of legalism. Peter there says to the people listening to him, "You couldn't bear the yoke of Old Testament legalism yourself as Jews. And now you want to impose it upon gentile Christians?" And the idea is putting this burden on their shoulders.

Galatians 6:2 summarizes it very well. Let's read that one: "Bear one another's burdens." There you have the word "bear" in its basic meaning of getting under somebody else's problem, and carrying somebody else's load: "Bearing one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ." The law of Christ is to love the Lord your God with all your heart; with all your mind; and, with all your soul, and your neighbor in the same way. What he's saying here in Galatians 6:2 is to help carry the burden of your weaker brother's cares; his scruples; his ignorance; his failings; and, his griefs.

Now this puts a totally different perspective on the Christian life than we generally exercise as grace people. As grace Christians, we tend to be achievers. We tend to be out there hustling. We tend to be moving toward our goals. We tend to be achieving the things that we want to achieve. We walk out of here, and we go out into our separate paths. And most of the time, we're not waiting for the Lord God, our Father in heaven, to indicate to us the person that we need to be dealing with that day – the individual whose burden we need to get under to give him some help to shove it off, because we give him instruction in the Word of God. Nobody is going to have any problem removed unless it's removed by the doctrines of the Word of God. I don't care what your problem here is today: whether you're unhappy; whether you're depressed; whether things aren't going well; or, whatever it is, it is only a principle of doctrine that will give you the perspective that God has to enable you to come out right as a member of the royal family of God.

So, the apostle says, "You who are strong Christians have an obligation to get under the load of the weaknesses. The Greek word for "weaknesses" looks like this: the "asthenma." This is the word for "a failing," or for "an infirmity." Here, it refers to a spiritual breakdown. All the legalisms; all the spiritual misconceptions; all the self-confident nonsense; all the prejudices; and, all the arbitrary whims and doctrinal errors of the weak Christian are described in this word. This is referring to everything that offends the strong Christian. These who have these weaknesses are themselves in the category, he says, of those who are without strength: "adunatos." This is related to that "dunamis" word from which we get our English word "dynamite," because it's a power word. The letter "a' negates it – no power.

We're talking about a person who has weaknesses. He has no power. This means that he has no spiritual capacities. He has no spiritual maturity to enjoy his liberty under the grace of God. He cringes when he watches the strong Christian enjoy his freedoms in Christ. He doesn't feel free to enjoy that kind of liberty. Why? Because he has no spiritual strength. He's a spiritual weakling. And, therefore, he cannot enter into the enjoyment of his heritage as a member of the body of Christ. He has, furthermore, little capacity for serving God in the angelic conflict. He is easily shot down. He is very quickly a spiritual casualty. He is unable to live effectively in the devil's world. He's always getting tripped up. He's always getting fouled up. He's always getting whipped. He has a little divine good work that he produces.

Now, lest you misunderstand me, I'm not talking about somebody who last week became a Christian. I'm not talking about somebody who just entered the Christian life recently, and therefore has not developed much spiritual insight and strength. I'm talking about a lot of you who are right here who have no capacity whatsoever for spiritual things, simply because you let yourself go downhill. That is the great tragedy of the Christian life – somebody who falls into reversionism. So, you too can find yourself as an "adunatos" person, one without strength.

This kind of a Christian is a sucker for every TV preacher and con artist that comes down the line. Many Christians who think that they are an asset to God's work are in fact a great liability because of their doctrinal ignorance; their legalisms; and, their weak spiritual orientation.

**Don's just Please Yourselves**

So, Paul says, "Those of you who are strong Christians, you ought to get under the load of carrying these spiritual misconceptions and weaknesses of those who themselves are without strength. And the thing that you should not do is just to please yourself." The word "please" here means to make yourself happy. It looks like this in the Greek Bible. The word is "aresko." It means "to make yourselves happy." And in the Greek Bible, the word "yourselves" is printed separately to stress that he is talking about you as an individual, strong Christian. This is your constant duty – not to just make yourself happy. This is your personal form of conduct. It's in the infinitive mood, which tells us again that it is the will of God that you don't be happy all the time. Isn't that something? It is the will of God that you not be happy all the time. There are some Christians that, if they're not happy, they just can't believe that they're walking in the will of God. You should not be occupied with making yourself happy.

There are some Christians that if you go up to them and ask them, "Hey, what are you doing Tuesday afternoon?" They will say, "Why?" Even though they're not doing anything, because they're cagey. You might ask them to do something that's going to interrupt their plans; their happiness; and, their fun and games. Did you ever notice that? If you come up and ask me, "What are you doing Tuesday afternoon?" I'll say, "Nothing. I never have anything to do." So, you say, "Fine, I'd like you to . . .," and you got me. But there are some people who are so preoccupied with making themselves happy, that they're even cagey about letting you know when they're available for anything but their own doings.

Pleasing ourselves includes doing all those things, however, that a Christian has a right to do. And sometimes you don't do what you have the right to do. The strong Christian, as a part of God's royalty, should act in the noble way of assisting the weaker family members, even if it interferes with your own plans. Pleasing only ourselves as strong Christians means hurting those who are spiritually weak. Parents who are preoccupied with things usually that they should not be preoccupied with, because there are improper roles laid upon them, I have noticed, don't have too much patience with their children, because they're all shot, and it becomes an irritation because the principle is: "I am occupied to please myself. So, butt out, kid."

This is not a small thing. This is a commonplace defect in Christian circles – the Christians who cannot get his mind off of pleasing himself. This, of course, never means pleasing others who are out to do something that is morally evil – some moral evil that they pursue. You don't go along with them to please them in that way. It is axiomatic, then, that the strong should help the weak in life. Those who claim to be strong Christians, thus assume the obligation of carrying along the spiritually mature. Strong Christians are, first of all, however, to please God, and they do this by helping the weak believer. It's the "agape" love that God the Holy Spirit provides in a strong Christian that moves him to be unselfish in spite of his old sin nature.

I think this is a very important verse. The time has come to reevaluate whether pleasing yourself is causing you to miss out on God's best for you, both now and in eternity, and for the eternal rewards that would be yours if you were preoccupied with something else. In the weeks that are to come, I hope to lay before you some of the reasons why I think the 1990s are going to be a dramatic time in human history. I have almost come to the very line without daring to say it – that the 1990s are the end of the line. And I, for one, will be very surprised if we are still around at the end of the 1990s. And I mean in the early part of the 1990s. I, for one, will be very surprised if the rapture has not taken place, for a number of reasons that we will go into in the future.

Suppose for a moment that that possibly is the case. Should that give you a perspective on whom you please in your life? What is it that you are investing it in? Are you going to play the fool of the guy who made himself bigger barns, only to check out with nothing? I cannot believe when I watch Christians who are fruitful; who are productive in the work of God; and, who are engaged in the Lord's ministry, and they chuck it in order to gain some material advantage. They chuck it to pursue something in life that suddenly undermines and denies them their opportunity for serving the living God. The strong get under the weak. We help them to overcome their weakness. We cannot do that without putting ourselves out in their behalf, which means that you cannot please yourself all the time, and pursue your own objectives.

Verse 2 therefore gives us this admonition: "Let each of us." And in the great Bible, the word "each" comes first. It looks like this: "hekatos." And it's put first in the sentence in order to emphasize it. This connotes not you as a group, and not you as a local church, but you as an individual Christian. Each of us personally are to do something. We are to do some pleasing. The word is "areskeo." The word means "to make happy in some way." The strong Christian is to try to make the weak Christian happy. Talk about going upstream against the sin nature! The strong Christian is to be preoccupied with making the weak Christian happy – to go out of his way to make the weak Christian happy. Ultimately, you make him happy by helping him to overcome his spiritual disorientation.

This is a word which is in the present tense, which tells us that this is our continuous duty as a Christian. It is active voice, which means you perform this action yourself individually. And I want to tell you something else. You should know that this is imperative mood. This is a divine command. God is not asking you to please other people. He is telling you to do it. And who is it that you are to please? You are to please "your neighbor." The Greek word is your "plesion." This refers here to other Christians, not to people in general, because our context is talking about strong Christians and weak Christians. It refers spiritually to the weak Christian as your neighbor.

**For your Neighbor's Good**

Also, you are to do this, he says, for a very specific purpose. You are to seek to please him "for," introducing the purpose, "his good." And the Greek word is "agathos." You will remember perhaps that "agathos" is one of the New Testament Greek words for "good," which is "good" in the sense of beneficial. Do for your neighbor, your weaker brother, that which is beneficial for him – that which is for his good. Now, what is Paul talking about? You may remember that, in Ephesians 6:6, the apostle Paul says, "Not by way of eye service as men pleasers, but as slaves of Christ doing the will of God from the heart."

So, here is the apostle Paul, who, in the Ephesians 6:6, tells us not to be men pleasers. And here, in Romans 15:2, he is telling us "*to* please men." What Paul is saying here is to please the weak Christian in a way that is going to produce for that weak Christian spiritual good. No, you do not please a person by going along to something that is to his spiritual injury – something that is to his personal spiritual harm. You don't go along with something of an evil nature. It is the principle which was enunciated for us back in Romans 8:28, when Paul said, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

**Grace Salvation**

So, we, as the strong Christians, are to get under the load of the problem of the weak Christian in order to produce for him that which God describes as "good." In the Bible, good that God has for the human race falls into three categories. Phase one good is very simply the provision of grace salvation through Jesus Christ as enunciated in John 3:16. The first good that God has for a human being is personal salvation through the grace of God. In this way, a sinner receives the absolute righteousness of Jesus Christ. It is forever imputed to him. That fully qualifies him for heaven, as Romans 3:21-22 tell us. Once you have the absolute righteousness of Jesus Christ, God looks at you, and says, "You're justified. You come into heaven." The lost sinner has hope of potential salvation because God has satisfied His own justice against that sinner, apart from what the sinner does. That's the great thing about grace salvation. You know you can be saved because God has handled the deal from start to finish. He has provided all that is necessary to satisfy His own justice.

Everyone who is born into the human race comes in with the contamination of Adam's guilt upon him. He comes in with the sin nature. So automatically he's doomed to the lake of fire, until God does for him the good thing of salvation. Everyone born into the race is under God's divine condemnation. Therefore, none of his works have any value. And that's a wonderful thing for God to have said, "I declared you to be under sin. That means that you can't give Me anything that I can accept for your salvation. You are under sin. And I, as judge, have declared you to be in that condition. Therefore, you are ready now to be born again by what I can give you to provide that salvation.”

**Positional Sanctification**

Your personal adjustment to the justice of God comes at the point where you trust in Jesus Christ for the divine good of salvation. He gives you that in spite of all of your evil. Phase one of God's plan of good for the human race we call positional sanctification. You are forever set apart to heaven in salvation through Jesus Christ. Hebrews 10:10 tells us that. You have positional sanctification. You are set apart by God for the purpose of eternal life, and nothing can ever again interfere with that. Positional sanctification is not affected by your carnality. Your carnality will bring you discipline, but it will not affect your salvation. Positional sanctification is God's decision as the Judge of the universe, based upon your union with Jesus Christ, that you are forever sanctified (forever set apart). That's what the word sanctified means. You're set apart to eternal life.

Yes, we look in the Bible, and what do we discover? We discover that some of the worst scoundrels that ever breathed on the face of the earth, like the church members in the city of Corinth, are called "saints," and are called "sanctified people." Because of the way they lived? No, they were extremely carnal. And they were under divine discipline. But they were sanctified saints because of what God had done through them through Jesus Christ. It is very important that you understand the first phase of the good that God wants to bring a human being.

So, to every human being that you and I deal with, as strong believers, to whom we are to bring good, the first good is the good of the gospel for salvation.

**The Christian Life on Earth**

Then there is phase two of good. Phase two is the Christian life on earth, which has great potential for blessings in time. God has provided for you a system by which you may grow spiritually. As a matter of fact, He devised this system for His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, in His humanity. He told the Son, "I have prepared for you to come to this earth as a human being. I have given you a system of power by which you will be able to live in the devil's world, and whip him at every turn. He will not be able to defeat you if you function in this system. And I want you to go to earth now, and I want you to field-test it. That system that I have provided," the Father said, "is the Word of God. At that time, it was the Old Testament Scriptures. It is inerrant. It is perfect. It is the revelation of true truth. I have also given you the personal indwelling of God the Holy Spirit, Who will take the Word of God that you know, and will use it as a searchlight to illuminate guidance for your life, and to illuminate your path so you'll know how to walk, and to show you where Satan is sneaking in with his tricks. The Word of God will be a beacon (a search light) that will reveal everything you need to know. As long as you stay in fellowship with God the Holy Spirit, and as long as you stay in the Word of God, feeding upon it, you have a power system that is unbeatable.

Well, all of us know that it worked beautifully. Jesus Christ came into this world sinless, and He went out sinless. And He left the system for us to use. If you become impatient with the stress that we may place upon your disinterest in doctrine; your disinterest in learning the Word of God; and, your disinterest in feeding upon this Word during the week, it is because you don't understand the cost. And I don't feel sorry for some of you. I'm going to have a hard time standing at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and looking across at you, when you find what you have paid in great loss because of the lifestyle you lived. I'm going to have a hard time not telling you: "You deserve it. You had it coming. You knew better, and you turned your back on it."

We're talking about great realities that are possible for you here on this earth of tremendous spiritual blessings in time – the divine viewpoint that comes from the Word of God. So, your growth and knowledge of God's word, the Bible, builds the capacity in your soul for serving God, and providing hope for rewards in eternity. Without this doctrine, you don't have a container.

What phase two does, in this grace system of perception of giving you the Word of God, is that it pours into it the grace of God, which fills up, and fills up, and fills up from doctrine. Then, as Psalm 23 says, "Your cup starts overflowing." And you cannot sustain, and you can hardly tolerate the blessings and the grace of God upon your life.

Now, having said that, I do not want you to think that I'm telling you that all of you are going to get rich enough to buy one of those nice pink Cadillacs. We have a con artist here in the Dallas / Fort Worth area that's always telling people that. I spoke to a man the other day. I could hardly get away from him. He used to attend that man's congregation. This man himself was from the charismatic movement. So, he was sympathetic with what this preacher is doing. You see him on television all the time. And he's constantly telling people, "Sow your seed money. Send it in to me, and Bob will prosper you back." And people believe that because they are weak Christians, and they send the money to him. And he prospers tremendously.

I sat there one Sunday morning, and heard him announce that a very wealthy oil man in Oklahoma, had seven Rolls Royces that were tailor-made. There were none like them anywhere in the world. Even the Arabs don't have them. This man had seven of them. He was so impressed with this preacher's promise that if people would sow their seed, God would prosper them; and, if they would sow their seed by sending it to his work, God would blossom this out with great prosperity, that he said in one of those Rolls Royces. So, he drove up to church in it, and the congregation didn't like it. But this man's position was: "Because I am understanding that God blesses me in doing His work, and that those that God approves He indicates His approval by prospering you materially, I have to drive this Rolls-Royce in order to convince you that I am telling you the truth." Please do not give me any of your Rolls Royces. I would not drive them around.

However, he covered his tracks. This is what really made this simple man mad. He said that he got up in that congregation, and said, "Some of you don't like this Rolls Royce I've been given. I'm going to take a vote on it. How many of you think I should give it back?" Nobody raised a hand. "How many of you think I should keep it and drive it?" And they all raise their hands. Who's not going to raise his hand? I would have, but nobody else would. This con artist is out there, and simple Christians are running their lives down a rat hole. It is the indwelling Holy Spirit that enables you, with the Word of God, to escape that trap. The believer knows how to apply doctrine to his life. And, therefore, God bless him and prosper him in Satan's world. The whole point of being alive now is to invest your life in God's service, so as to store great treasures in heaven. Matthew 6:19-20 and Matthew 6:33 point that out. The only reason you're taking your next breath is to serve God. If you haven't learned that, you are really dumb. But you have to distinguish between what is service to yourself and what is really service to God.

The whole point of being alive now is your sanctification in God's world. The God, who has done the hardest thing for us of providing us the good of eternal life without compromising His Holiness, can most certainly do the easier thing of providing us the good of blessing in time.

**Super Grace**

Maximum blessings, of course, are achieved when you have grown spiritually to the super grace level. This is pointed out to us in James 4:6, where, in the verse before, James says, "God the Holy Spirit zealously wants to control your life and to guide you for the good of blessing in time and in eternity." And verse 6 says, "But He gives greater grace (super grace)." Therefore, it says, "God is opposed to the proud, but He gives grace to the humble." The proud is the carnal Christian. The humble is the spiritual Christian who is growing in the grace of God. James 4: 6 says, "If you build that spiritual maturity structure in your soul, you will go to super grace living." Will you be prosperous? Not necessarily. Some of you will be. Some of you will be pretty well off. Others of you will not be very well off. Others of you will be in a position where God expects you to take your salary, and whatever else you have, like Paul, in order to make the machinery of his ministry function. That's what Paul had to do. Paul never could become wealthy.

Our friend up in Tulsa, Oklahoma, the all-time great party carny man, Oral Roberts, is now giving away a book. It's entitled How I Found out that Jesus was not Poor. And if you will write to him, he will send you that book so that he will make you feel very comfortable in centering your life on yourself, and seeking prosperity.

Maximum blessing is at the super grace level. That maximum blessing is to be able to fulfill the will of God in your life. For some of you, that's by channeling money. For some of you, it is spiritual gifts and services of various kinds. Whatever it is, it's for you to decide, between you and God. But at least you should give it some thought.

It takes the knowledge of doctrine, and it takes positive volition toward that doctrine, to reach this. The super grace Christian is a beneficiary of great spiritual blessings. You, of course, are going to receive your logistical grace – the essentials for daily life. Some of you will receive a great deal more. If you do receive a great deal more, than your obligation to open doors of service is all the greater.

**Experiential Sanctification**

This, of course, is never possessed by the unbeliever. Phase 2 of God's plan a good is experiential sanctification – setting apart in your daily experience. The Holy Spirit, through the Word of God, sets you apart in your daily life to a life of godliness (John 17:17, 2 Corinthians 3:18, and Ephesians 5:25-26). The Christian's daily life, while not sinless, is a life which is no longer enslaved by the sin nature (Romans 6:6, Romans 6:12-22). The mature Christian, therefore, as Romans 12:1-2 says, turns his body over to the Lord. That's the point. God's work is done through human bodies. Those of you who give your human bodies to the Lord are those who are doing God's work. Where God's work does not have your human body, His work is not being done.

Through the intake of doctrine, the believer will build a spiritual maturity structure in his soul. And you know what that is. We talked about the five facets of that enterprise. Experiential sanctification is progressive. You become holy as you go along. Positional sanctification can't get any better. You can't get more saved. But sanctification in your experience – yes. From day to day, you can increase in the knowledge of Jesus Christ and in his grace. 2 Peter 3:18 tells us that.

**Rewards and Crowns**

We tie this up with phase three. Phase 3 good means blessings in eternity of rewards and crowns. The believer in heaven is now with the royal family of God, the church. He's there with a resurrection body. He is minus the old sin nature. He stands before the Judgment Seat of Christ. He has a great deal of hope. He has the eternity of salvation before him. That is secured. Now, his life is to be evaluated for its divine good production, and what flowed from the power system which God the Holy Spirit provided for him. He has a special place in heaven, or he doesn't. That's to be decided at the Judgment Seat of Christ. He has gone through undeserved sufferings on earth. His ultimate good now is to be realized at this point in time. Here is the reality of the Christian life. From suffering for Christ, as a Christian, and suffering with the mind of Christ, this believer now goes on into the full image of Christ in eternity as the final good that God has to offer a human being. He has a resurrected body. It's glorified. It's like the body of Jesus Christ. It can never sin again, and can never die. It is the culmination of spiritual growth through his era of suffering. And no matter how grim the pieces of your life have been – all those filthy rags of your human good righteousness, all that is now cast aside, and you are transformed into the very image of Jesus Christ.

**Ultimate Sanctification**

Phase three of God's plan of good is ultimate sanctification. Your body, perfect as the body of Christ, is sinless. Ephesians 5:27 and 1 Thessalonians 5:23 point that out. You are preserved for this hope. You are going to stand there, and you are going to be rewarded. Jude 24 points that out. You reach the ultimate potential of being transformed into the very image of Jesus Christ. This is the point of entering into your eternal enjoyment of treasures which you have set aside in your service to God. We've gone over that in great detail. You understand the principle of reward for divine good. 1 Corinthians 3 uses two words, and you must cope with those personally.

**Rewards and Loss**

They say that some Christians will suffer loss. He uses the word "loss." It says that other Christians will receive rewards. It uses the word "rewards." Those who do not like to think that some Christians will have a more blessed status in heaven than others as a result of how they lived their lives, usually take that passage of Scripture, and they apply it to salvation. And they say that some Christians are going to find that they have lost their salvation, and some Christians are going to be rewarded with salvation. The word "reward" in the Greek Bible means you've earned it. Therefore, we know it does not apply to salvation. Salvation comes as a gift from God. Salvation is by the grace gift of God. But rewards are something that you earn – what you have coming.

So, when we are strong Christians, we deal with our weak brethren. What we want to do for them is to bring, Paul says, "God's good to them:" the good of eternal life, salvation; the good of living a sinless life as much as possible here on this earth, and being blessed by God because of that; and, developing divine good production with your life – walking in the Spirit so that He will use you for that. So, the third phase of good is eternal rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ: "Come in, you good and faithful servant, and enjoy the blessings that God has provided especially for you for all eternity."

Paul says, at the end of verse 2, that: "We seek to bring this good to our brothers (our weaker brethren) to." And it uses the Greek preposition "pros" which means "looking forward to his edification." And that's the Greek word "oikodome." The word means "an act of building." In order that we may build something spiritually in the life of this weak Christian. And what we are talking about here is so tremendous, and it's so awesome, as we will look at this next time, and put the Scriptures that connect together that produce edification, it makes a strong Christian out of a weakling. It is within your capacity, and it is in your hands, to be able to do this for that weak Christian.

We who are the strong, because we have responded to instruction in the Word of God – we have a divine duty and obligation to get under the load of all the trivialities and misconceptions and spiritual idiocies of those who just do not have any spiritual strengths, because they are so spiritually weak. We who are strong must deal with these people, and we should not just shove them aside to please ourselves. Therefore, as a command from our Father in heaven, each of us should be preoccupied with trying to please our weaker brother for a specific way – to a specific goal, to enable him to enjoy the good that God has provided for him from eternity past. There are three phases of good. We do this for the purpose that we may build him up into an edified, strong believer who can take his place on the line in spiritual combat with the rest of the strong believers. It is within your capacity to do just that for others.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1988

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