

## Who Are You Trying to Please? (Part 2)

### Romans 15:1-3

**Thought for the Day:** Many of our struggles with others will be resolved when we choose to operate according to biblical priorities: Pleasing God first, others second, and ourselves last.

Many people today are living with a "Me first! mentality." In their heart-of-hearts, they believe they are the center of the universe. Everyone and everything is supposed to work to meet their needs and expectations and always give way to their preferences and desires. The fact is, our fallen sinful nature is incredibly self-centered!

As followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are called to operate according to a different set of priorities: God first, others second and ourselves last. Following these priorities will go a long way in helping us to deal with "disputable matters" (Romans 14:1) in the church.

#### **I. Living to Please Ourselves (15:1)**

**1 We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.**

- The spiritually mature believers in the church have an obligation to maintain unity and harmony by bearing with, putting up with, the failings of the more immature believers. (Philippians 2:3-4)
- The mature believers need to give immature believers time to grow up! They need to provide a loving, accepting environment of support and encouragement for the immature believers.

#### **II. Living to Please Our Neighbor (15:2)**

**2 Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.**

- God is not calling us to be "people pleasers." This is not good for your mental health!
- Verses 1 and 2 are two sides of the same coin: On the one side, we willingly choose to set aside our rights and preferences and, on the other side, we make it our ambition to build up our brother or sister in Christ, so they can grow to spiritual maturity.
- The goal is not to get our own way; the goal is to encourage and help those around us to grow and become more like the Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 8:28-30)
- When we are working to help others mature spiritually, we are partnering with God in the work He is accomplishing in the lives of His children.
- The purpose of Paul's life and ministry was to win people to Christ and then build them up in their Christian life—to make them spiritually mature followers of Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 9:19-23; Colossians 1:28-29)

#### **III. Living to Please Our Heavenly Father (15:3)**

**3 For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me."**

- In this issue of "disputable matters", as in all issues of the Christian life, Jesus Christ is our pattern and example.

- Jesus did not live and minister to please Himself. Rather, He put the will of His Heavenly Father above His own. (John 4:34; 5:30; 8:28-30)
  - In our culture today, giving up your rights to accommodate the preferences and desires of others is a sign of weakness. But in the kingdom of God, it is a sign of true strength.
  - As Christ loved and served us, so we are to love and serve one another—and in this way, we build one another up. (Mark 10:45)
  - “Strength is not independence from God, but total dependence on God. Strength in the church doesn't come from each believer being completely independent but from mutual interdependence. Truly strong believers are those who are willing to limit their freedoms in order to care for and love their weaker brothers and sisters.” (*The Life Application Commentary Series*)
- Ephesians 5:8, 10; 2 Corinthians 5:9-10
  - What are the things we have done that will be considered “good” and worthy of eternal reward? Those things we have done to please God—especially those things that build up others spiritually.
  - What are the things we have done that will be considered “bad” and not worthy of eternal reward? Those things we have done to please ourselves with no thought of pleasing God or others.
- 1 Thessalonians 4:1 – “Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more.”