**Christ Bore the Weak – By Thailer Jimerson**

Once again, due to lively discussion, we weren’t able to quite finish all the thoughts in our Bible class covering **Romans 14**.

 Paul has just finished taking the broad principle of the love-debt that all Christians owe to everyone in the world (**Romans 13.8**) and applied it to a very specific dispute in the church in Rome. Among the multi-cultural church members consisting of both Jews and non-Jews was this disagreement over various dietary mores and restrictions from the Old Covenant. Those who were “stronger” fully realized their liberty in Christ to eat all things, and those who were “weaker” had yet to fully grasp their liberty in Christ, freedom from the Law. In this chapter, Paul lays out some ground rules for both sides to maintain love and mutuality so as to compose the church in peace. But what many don’t realize is that the foundation for this peace is actually found in the example of Christ himself in **Romans 15.1-7**. Here’s what it says:

*“We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, “The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.” For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.”*

 It would be a shame if we understood what Paul was calling us to in Romans 14 without understanding why. The reason? Because this behavior towards one another, the strong for the weak, models the gospel and provides a compelling evidence for the unifying power of Christ among church members of disparate generations, cultures, races, and opinions.

Pay attention to the word “welcome” – as in “welcome one another”. Some translations say “accept” or “receive”. According to Douglass Moo this is actually a pretty weak translation of the original word. The Greek word actually means to pull towards you and alongside you, to bear up under their difficulties, their weak consciences, their scruples, etc., as your own. And if we’re obedient to this, we will discover the greatest unity that a church can have: the strong bearing with the weak. And how is the model for this? “Welcome one another *as Christ has welcomed you”.*

Christ condescended to us. He was in the form of God but left that, took on flesh and humanity, lived among us, received us though we were weak, though we were ignorant, though we were blind, miserable and enemies of God, and he took us next to his side, and even died for our sins to forgive us of everything wrong we’ve ever done. And he promises us to pull us upward in heart, in character, in salvation.

Somehow, Paul says, when people see us doing that – they can catch glimpses of the gospel of Jesus. This is the power for unity.