

FOREVER FAMILY

By John Richardson

SCRIPTURE

Romans 15:1–6

We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. ² Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. ³ For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, “The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.” ⁴ 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. ⁵ May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, ⁶ that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

OBSERVATION

When believers think about the body of Christ, all press toward seeing the body gathered in one place. But what happens when the body is unable to gather? How does the church body still connect as people undergo “social distancing”? Romans 15 gives believers a way to look into God’s Word and understand how timeless truths apply in modern situations. Strong and weak have tones of better or lesser, but here we all know that strengths and weaknesses across the body change with situations, spiritual attacks, and daily wrestles with life. At one time a believer may be strong and able to help a brother or sister who is struggling, then in a few weeks the table will have turned. The beauty of the body is that we all need each other to be strong when we are weak.

Paul writes that we should seek to please our neighbor for their good. It is amazing to think that a body of believers (faith family) seeks neighbor over self. The author points the church to the supreme example of Christ who did not seek His own self-preservation or preferences. Christ carried our sins to invite us into His family and give us endurance and encouragement to love one another. This is our family of hope.

- Harmony Hill has an obligation to care for one another each day; now more than ever we need to consider how we will seek to bear the failings of others. Who has God placed in your immediate faith family to walk with? With Christ as the example, we can work to encourage one another.
- This text gives us insight into how we live in harmony with one another. The differences between individuals can only be unified as “through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.” Each day we need to engage God in His Word to be able to live together as a family, seeking to provide hope. Many in our church family will wrestle with isolation and fear. Our hope is found in Christ and exercised through enduring and encouraging together.
- Our final call in verse 6 is to glorify God. The coronavirus is a space where God is drawing us together to give Him glory, to make Him famous across the globe as believers do something the world can’t: live together in hope. The reason we are in one body is to grow

in the graces of Christ as we reach out to one another. We will lead others to Christ as we care for one another and share the gospel of hope with those who are not yet part of the family.

OBEDIENCE

Today, reach out to those in your faith family and see how you can bear their failings and give encouragement. Start with those who are in your life group—they need you, and you need them. Set up a way to contact people each day. Plan to ask how you can be a blessing to people on your street, perhaps by delivering scripture to neighbors or items that you pick up in the store.

PRAYER

Pray that God will open your heart to care more for your neighbor than your own pleasures or self-preservation. Ask Him for encouragement and endurance to love others well. Meet Him in prayer for those who are part of our faith family by name.