



## The Unity Between Strong and Weak Believers Part 5

November 30, 2025      Romans 15:1-7

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(Video 1:02:00)

You want to open your Bibles, if you will, to Romans chapter 14. Romans chapter 14. As you know, we have been in this book of Romans and in this particular chapter for some time now. And in Romans 14 and now, as we enter chapter 15, from Romans 14 verses 1 all the way to the end of 14 and all the way into about the 13th, 14th, 15th verse of Romans 15, Paul is talking about the unity of the church, the unity of believers, and he's underscoring so-called stronger believers and the desire for them to be constantly unified with the weaker brothers and sisters in Christ. Weaker in what sense? And we've underscored that over and over again the last few weeks. Weak in the sense of their conscience may not be, and definitely is not, as well informed as the stronger brother and sister in Christ. Whereas the stronger brother and sister in Christ understands his liberty, his freedom in Christ, he's not hung up by ritualistic taboos of what to eat, what not to eat, what to drink, what not to drink, what day to worship on, and so forth. Whether or not you have to read the King James Version or whatever, couldn't help but pick up on that. And so some people still hung up on those things, and the stronger brother is encouraged to accept with understanding his weaker brother. That's one unifying force, verses one through 12 or 13 of chapter 14. And secondly, we saw in verses 13 to the end of chapter 14 that the stronger brother was encouraged to build up the weaker brother without offending, and we talked about all of that. And then as we get into chapter 15, the first seven verses, we're encouraged by Paul to please one another as Christ pleased.

Let's take a look at Romans 15:1. ***Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength...*** So let me stop right there. ***we who are strong ought***, the word *ought* there carries with it the idea of a debt that is owed. It's a burden, a liability that we are



to pay in the sense that we have a debt that we owe to our weaker brothers and we need to pay it. These are five or six motivations or mental attitudes that he says we should have that will enable us, as the stronger brother in Christ, the one who understands our freedom in Christ, to better love and accept and engraft in and enfold the weaker brother. So that over time the one whose conscience is not as well informed as ours, the one who doesn't understand and appreciate the liberty that they have in Christ will grow and matriculate and mature, will learn more of the word of God, will see holiness modeled and so forth. Over time, just what our motto as a church says, we build bridges of grace strong enough to support the weight of God's truth. That's what we're about. That's the motto that's on our bulletin and that's what we're about as believers in Christ. We build bridges of grace with our weaker brother and sister in Christ, strong enough to eventually, over time, support the weight of God's truth to better inform their conscience, to grow and mature them in the Lord, to appreciate their spiritual freedoms that they have in Christ, and to grow in a greater and greater holiness.

So he's given us those motivations there and the first one he gives us right off the bat in verse one is to just have a consideration for others, ***ought to bear the weaknesses for those without strength.***

And at the end of that verse he gives us a second motivation ***and not just please ourselves.*** There should be a disregard, if you will, of self. Look at verse two. He goes on, ***Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, ...*** It's always with the intent of your neighbor's good. This is agape love, as you know, a love that always seeks the best for the object of its love. So we disregard ourself. We consider others.



Then he says a third motivation. Look at verse three, ***For even Christ did not please Himself;*** and he quotes a passage out of Psalm 69 and what's he say? ***But as it is written, "THE REPROACHES OF THOSE WHO REPROACH THEE FELL UPON ME."*** Those who dislike God fell upon Me. Christ bore the reproaches of men. Christ took upon that type of suffering. How dare we who understand our freedom in Christ not consider and reach out and show love to a weaker brother in Christ. This is all in the concept of unity within the church and not causing factions and divisions.

And then he gives us another reason why we would do that, and that reason is simply this. It's submission to the scriptures. It's *hypomenō*. It's coming under the yoke of the authority of the word of God. It's what the word of God would have us do. He says here in verse four, ***For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope.*** Now because of the limitations of time, and because this verse is so critical and important, I want to underscore two or three words that are set forth there. *The scriptures, perseverance, and hope.* Now, again, it's all in the context of unity in the body of Christ. It's all in the context of persevering if you will, enduring if you will, accommodating and setting aside our liberties, restraining our liberties, and accommodating the weaker brother and so forth.

But that verse also has a much, much broader connotation, and that's what I wanted to underscore, especially so before we go to the Lord's table. It's that word there, *hope. Hope.* Man needs hope more than he needs anything else. Did you know that? You know that man, (woman, people, humans) cannot live without hope. Jesus said it point blank. A man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes out of the mouth of God. What does it mean? It's only the word of God that gives us hope. It's only the word of God that gives you hope for the future. It's only the word of God that tells you what the goal of life is all about. It's only the



word of God that explains the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man and the redemption that is in Christ. It's only the word of God that explains the kingdom of God. It's only the word of God that instructs you and me what the whole point of life is all about. What is the chief end of man? To glorify God and enjoy Him forever. Where do you find that? You don't see it in nature. I talk to relatives and friends who say, "Oh God, I believe in God. I mean, you know every Winter when I go duck hunting, I'm telling you I see the beautiful lake and I see the forest I see the trees and at night we camp under the stars and I see the constellations, and the moon... and on and on. And it's obvious there's a God." That's right. But nowhere in nature, that general revelation of the existence of God, nowhere in that nature do you see the purpose of your life. Nowhere in that nature do you see the answer for that angst, that guilt, that emptiness, that void that's in your life. Only in the Word of God, only in special revelation. One of the greatest loving acts of God is the fact that He wrote you a book to reveal Himself, the Scriptures. In the Word of God. Psalm 119 which extols the Word of God, says on four separate occasions verse 49, 81 and I think verses 114, 116 all say I hope in thy Word. As a matter of fact Psalm 119:49 says God **causes me** to hope in His word. It's only in the Word of God is hope revealed to the human soul. In Jeremiah 14:8 God is called the **Hope of Israel**. 1 Timothy 1:1 Jesus, in the person of the Christ, Jesus Christ is called **our hope**, our hope. See Ephesians 2:12 powerful passage of Scripture. Paul writing to the church at Ephesus speaking to Gentiles says, you were **at that time**, before they came to know Christ as Lord and Savior, before the gospel was brought to them, **You were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the Commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise.** What's the covenants of promise? It's the scriptures. That's the Word of God. You didn't have those and therefore he says, **having no hope** because you were **without God in the world.** God in the scriptures reveals truth and gives us hope. Hope comes from the scriptures.



Now, what in the world is hope? I'm so happy you asked. Hope can be defined as: A certainty, get this, it's a certainty in something, or someone, that has not yet been fully realized or experienced. Hope is a certainty that you have in your soul, in your heart of hearts, in the you that's you when you talk to yourself, a certainty that has not yet been fully realized or experienced. One commentator said Biblical hope is: *a confident expectation that what God has promised will come to pass, grounded in God's Faithfulness (meaning God's character) not in wishful thinking.* Hope comes to man only one way; it comes through the Word of God. That's why all these philosophers, all these isms and schisms, all of the Jean-Paul Sartre's, and the Albert Camus', and all of these people that I was forced to read in a Liberal arts classes at Purdue, all of those individuals have absolute a futility of life. Huxley and all the atheists, all of them, end up with a total hopelessness. Because they don't go to the source where the answer is, they're without God in the world. And so were all Jews, and all Gentiles, until the scriptures were brought to us, brought to them. So hope comes from God. It's revealed to us in His word.

I said man could not live without hope. I meant that literally, literally. We have had a great object lesson of that for years right here in our own state of Arizona where former Senator, John McCain, and now of course passed away years ago, literally was a prisoner of war. William Stockdale, who was shot down and was for seven years a prisoner of war in the Hanoi Hilton in North Vietnam. They call it the Hanoi Hilton, was a prisoner of war. And Victor Frankel is somebody else you can read about who suffered unbelievable atrocities at the hands of the Nazis, in Auschwitz and Dachau and so forth. Those men give testimony, and many others, where they saw individuals literally die because they lost all hope. Frankel records, McCain records, Stockdale... they said sometimes it would come rapidly you could see it. One day one of the prisoners just wouldn't get up. Wouldn't shave. Wouldn't clean up.



Wouldn't eat. Wouldn't go out to the playground. No amount of pleading from his fellow prisoners of war, no amount of threats from the captors, would make him move. He would lay down, curl up in a ball in his own excrement. Within 24-48 hours he'd be dead. Over and over and over again. They asked Stockdale. They asked McCain and Frankel, "What is it that kept you going?" Hope. Hope one day we'd be released, one day we'd be set free. Frankel said, "I never lost sight of the ultimate (he says) dignity of man in spite of the horrific torture going on." And so when man loses that hope he assuredly, assuredly, is on a road to nowhere.

Now, we talk a lot about a doctrine called the Perseverance, or the Preservation, of the Saints. What's that got to do with Romans 15:4? Well, it says In Romans 15:4, let me underscore it again, **[For] whatever was written in earlier times** (that's the scriptures) **was written for our instruction that through**, now look at this, **perseverance and the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope**. We might have that certainty, certainty, of what? Certainty of a future. Certainty of eternal life. Certainty of a purpose in life. Certainty of a meaning. Certainty of rescue and salvation, spiritually speaking, and so forth. Look at verse 5, **Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement**. It's God who gives the encouragement of the scriptures, and it's God who gives this perseverance.

Why do you keep saying "perseverance"? Because hope is given to us in the Word of God. But guess what? It's intensified, it's deepened, it's magnified, through perseverance, it's magnified through endurance. What are you talking about? I love what this one man said, the perseverance of the Saints, he says: *Many people think that hope grows in times of blessings. Oh, not true. Hope doesn't grow in times of blessings and ease and comfort, when everything is going well. That's not what the Word of God says at all. It says quite frankly hope grows through tribulation. Hope grows through trials.* What's hope? That certainty, that assurance, that there



is a future that your life counts for something, that it has meaning, that you're one day going to reside in a glorious heaven with your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

It's hard times that increase that. How so? Turn, if you will, to Romans chapter 5. Go back to Romans chapter 5. We spent some time on this before. By the way, I don't know how your week went, but dear Peggy Brown's week started out with a funeral, Randy and Selena Walters week ended with a funeral, my week started with funeral and ended with a funeral, in both cases talking about the blessed hope. As a matter of fact, showing you that the Word of God is where we get our hope, I walked away from a graveside Friday where a 46 year old, the remains of a 46 year old son, was lowered into the ground. And before I walked away, you know what I read? We stood at the graveside together and we went 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, ***But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you may not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.*** Here we go. ***Therefore comfort one another with these words.***

Why would those words bring comfort? Because they tell you of the hope that you have as a child of God. But it's one thing to be told that truth, and by God's grace He gives you the faith to believe that truth, and thereby andin dwells you with the Holy Spirit of God, and so you have that confidence assurance if you will. But that's just the start, because you and I have to live life. We matriculate along through what Teri calls the 'vagaries of life', the heartaches and



the sufferings and the ups and the downs and the joys and the laughter and the tears and the sorrow of this life. And it's through those tears and sorrow, it's through those tribulations, it's through those grave side moments, that God uses to increase and deepen and intensify our hope.

Now we're at Romans chapter 5. Take a look at Romans chapter 5. Let's just pick it up at verse 1. **Therefore having been justified by faith**, he's talking to believers, **we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,...** No longer at war with God. He's no longer at war with us. Peace has been made. Verse 2, **...Lord Jesus Christ through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult...** That word *exalt* there means to be triumphant with, and it has a sense of joyousness to it. We have a joyous triumph, we exult, what? **in hope**, hope of what? Our hope, our certainty, that something is absolutely true and real, even though we haven't fully experienced it yet. What is it? The glory of God. What's the glory of God? It's all the character of Almighty God. It's the ultimate promises of God. It's the fact that He is faithful to His word. It's the fact that He's promised to do various things. He said I will never leave you nor forsake you. He said I'm coming again. He said the dead in Christ will come back with me. He says there's a purpose to your life. There's a meaning to your life. He says I, literally, have created you for such a time as this. And on all the other promises in the word of God.

And so he says, **And not only this**, verse 3, **but we also exult**, here we go, we have a joyous victory, a triumphant in this, if you will, **in our tribulations...** Why in the world...? Does that mean we walk around and say, "Ha ha ha I have cancer. I'm so happy." No. "My loved one died. I'm so happy." No, of course not. So what's he talking about? What is joy? Biblical joy is that deep-seated confidence that you can stand at the grave side of a loved one with tears running down your face and know, in your heart of hearts, it's all okay. It's all gonna be fine. It's an



absence of fear. An absence of fear deep in your soul. He says, ***not only this but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing*** this. now you're never gonna know this if the word of God doesn't tell it to you. So here's the word of God giving you hope, but also your perseverance is going to intensify that hope, and he tells you how so. Our ***tribulation brings about perseverance***. You see, we talk about the preservation of the Saints; He who has begun a good work in you will fulfill it until the day of Jesus Christ. We're gonna celebrate the Lord's table in a moment and Jesus, right there before the cross, what's He say? I won't drink this fruit of the vine with you again until I drink it with you in My coming kingdom. You know what that tells me? Every one of you men sitting at this table, Judas had already gone out, every one of you men sitting at this table, you're all gonna make it! You're gonna have trials tribulations, fears, struggles, stumble, fall and so forth. But you're not going to be lost, and My purposes for you are going to be fulfilled. He says tribulation brings about [perseverance]. You are going to persevere. Why? Because God gives the perseverance, it's God who's at work in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure. There are many verses of Scripture that we'll look at in the weeks to come on this topic because I want to explore it with you in detail because hope is so critical for life. It's my wife's Favorite word in all the Bible. It's rapidly becoming mine as well.

Verse 4: ***and perseverance, proven character,...*** see tribulations result in perseverance, and when you persevere, when you endure, by the grace of God, through the hard times of life, it's proven character. It doesn't prove it to God. It proves it to you. What's it proved to you? It's your character in Christ. It means you see your faith is genuine. You see yourself going through hell on earth, striving to be obedient to the Word of God, striving to still honor God. Not perfectly of course, because we're fallen sinners, but you're striving in your heart of hearts. You want to be obedient to God. You want to try to "do it right", as God says, "Here's



how you do it, right." And then, all of the sudden, the thought strikes you, "Good grief, this is not natural!" This is not John Politan. My flesh would want to shake a fist at God. My flesh is gonna want to say, "Why me, why this, why now? Why, why, why." And yet, in my heart, "No, I know it's wrong and I confess that sin and I strive to want to do it right, and I realize that's not natural." That can only be supernatural. That means my faith is genuine. You see that's all those passages that say you are in the faith, and you're gonna be ready for a salvation ready to reveal if you continue in the faith. That's those passages in Hebrew 6 where it talks about if you've once tasted of the of the goodness of God and so forth, it's impossible to renew you again to salvation if you walk away. It's 1 John 2:19, says they walked away, they left us because they were never of us. But if your faith is genuine, you will persevere even through those difficult times, God will insist on doing it. You're his child. He brings you through He promises it, and you realize, "my faith is genuine." And that gives you assurance, and that assurance increases your hope. How do you know? Look at the end of verse 3, **tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character,** What's the next word? **hope.** And by the way verse 5 **and hope does not disappoint,** meaning what? Hope gets done. Hope is real. Hope does exactly what is designed to do What's that? **because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.** You're indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God. Therefore you're convicted and convinced of that truth and the Word of God says, **For while we were still helpless at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.** That's what we're gonna celebrate at the Lord's table, right? The death of Christ the burial and resurrection of Christ. Verse 7, **For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.**



So what? This is the Word of God giving you more hope. How so? Because he does a logical thing. If Almighty God died to save and rescue you when you were an enemy, when your back was turned, when you were running from Him, when you weren't even seeking Him... if He does all that to save you, to rescue you, what do you think He's gonna do now that you're one of his children? Do you think he's gonna cast you out? You think you could be lost? No, he goes on. ***Much more than***, verse 9, ***having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved***, we shall be rescued from what? ***The wrath of God through Him***. What's the wrath of God? Hell, and, by the way, one aspect of hell, one definition of hell: No hope. There's no more hope once you're there. And what's he say? ***For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His son, much more, having been reconciled we shall be saved by His life***. He's not gonna cast you off. All whom the father gives to me will come to me and I lose none of them. They're in My hand, He says in John 10, and they're in the Father's hand, and no one can snatch them away from us. The end of Romans, what's it say? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? For death or life, principalities, height or depth, things to come, and so on... and so is nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God Which is in Christ Jesus. Not even your failures; your sin. Not even the struggle. And then what's he say in verse 11? ***And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have received the reconciliation***.

Why did I want to go to that passage? He talks about *perseverance* in verses three and four, persevering. But when He says, much more having been reconciled at the end of verse 10, we shall be saved by His life, that's God. That's the flip side of *perseverance*. That's *preservation*. That's God Making sure that you and I persevere.

As the men come forward to serve us the elements, there's much, much, more that I want to share about this. Let me just say as they're coming up, real life, it's a true life story: There was



a community, actually in a valley, in a beautiful valley in western Pennsylvania, and it was literally the idyllic neighborhood, if you will. The manicured lawns and the white picket fences and the painted buildings and a neat little main street and on and on and on. The countryside and the nice farms and the groves, etc., so forth. But the word came out that they were going to build a hydroelectric dam, and they were going to be damming up a river and over the next two and a half to three years, that river was going to back up and it was literally going to flood the valley where this little community was located. And he said an amazing metamorphosis took place. Over the next two or two and a half years, before they actually got the dam built and started backing up the water to flood this community, none of the houses got painted anymore. None of the buildings got painted. Most of the lawns went unmanicured and weeds grew up. Weeds grew up in the middle of the street. The people had not moved away yet, and yet the whole place became a scene of rubble, if you will, and disrepair. And they asked one man about it, and he had a great comment. He said this: *When there's no faith in the future, there is total hopelessness, and there's no activity in the present.* When there's no faith in the future, there's no care for the present.

You cannot exist without hope, and the Word of God says that no matter what the hard times of life you're going through, the truth of the matter is it should intensify our hope because we see the reality of our faith. People say all the time, "I wish I had a deeper faith." Don't ever ask me to pray that you have greater faith because I'll pray that you have more troubles. Because when you have those troubles and you see God carry you through, it will deepen your faith and thereby, I might add, increase your joy. Men serve us the elements.

1 Peter 3 says ***Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance, which is imperishable and***



***undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, [so] that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;*** He goes on and says, ***and though you have not seen Him... you believe in Him*** and you ***rejoice with a joy inexpressible***. You haven't seen him yet. You haven't fully realized your relationship with Christ. You've only got a taste of it now. That's Peggy Brown. That's Randy and Selena Walter. That's them walking up to me after a funeral service and saying, "It's a weird feeling. I have tears. I'm sad and yet I'm so joyful because there's an absence of fear." They're living out 1 Peter 1:3-9, and they're able to live it out because of the cross; because of the death burial and resurrection of their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The night before He was crucified the scripture says Jesus took the bread and He broke it and He gave it to His disciples and said take eat of this this is my body which is given for you. Let's remember the body of Christ. The scripture says in similar fashion He took the cup. He said this is a cup of a new and an ever-lasting Covenant. It's that promise that I will be your God, and you will be my people. It's that promise that I will put a love for Me in your heart. That I'll remove your fleshly heart. I'll give you a new heart. It's that promise that I'll never leave you nor forsake you. It's that promise that I will indwell you. It's that promise of assurance that I'm coming again. It's that indwelling, that guarantee, that you get of Me and the person of the Holy Spirit constantly working in you to persevere, to endure, to be preserved as Jesus put it in His words, to drink this fruit of the vine with Him one day again in His glorious kingdom. That is a promise from the Word of God that gives hope to our souls, and the more



we struggle in this life and see that our faith is real, it deepens that joy and that hope. The night before He was crucified, when He took that cup and said this is a covenant a new covenant in my blood and said that He would not drink it again until he drank it with them in his glorious kingdom, He said as often as you do this, do it in remembrance of Me, part of which we've briefly just shared. Let's remember the blood of the Christ.

Father, we thank You for this time in Your word. As surely as we taste the sweetness of the grape, we realize that that grape had to be crushed to supply that sweet juice. So we realize that You, Yourself, in the person of Christ, were crushed so that we would forever know the sweetness and the joy of eternal life. We thank you for it all, again, with grateful hearts, we thank You for it in Jesus's matchless name. Amen and amen