

A SERIES OF DEVOTIONS BASED ON PAUL'S LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN ROME

HELPING OTHERS

Romans 15:1 "We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves"

Concern for self is common in today's culture. Our sinful Old Adam is self-centered, selfish, and self-focused. With rare exceptions it is most natural to be concerned about yourself, consider what is best for you and first do what is most beneficial to yourself. In 1994 Bill Bryson wrote the book, Made In America. In chapter 6 of that book he wrote, "It is true that over the last couple of hundred years or so, more and more Americans attended more to their "selves," to examining who they are and what they want and how to achieve their personal ends. In large measure, this reflects the broadening scope of individual autonomy."

In Romans, chapter 15 St. Paul addresses this same topic. He wrote in verse 1, "We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves" The Scottish theologian James Denney wrote several hundred years ago, "It is very easy for self-pleasing and mere willfulness to shelter (ourselves) under the disguise of Christian *principle*. But there is only one Christian principle which has no qualification—love." Loving and caring for our neighbor, Jesus taught, is what is God pleasing. As I wrote in a recent devotion, Jesus said of Himself, "I have come into the world not to be served but to serve . . ." (Mark 10:45)

"Not please ourselves . . ." is almost a foreign language in the United States today. All one needs to do is critically examine the advertising you see on T.V. to understand the message is quite clear, "Purchase this product to make your life better, easier, more pleasant and enjoyable, etc." Today's devotional text encourages you, a Christian in the strength of your faith in Jesus to be greatly concerned for others even though doing so may create a burden in your personal life.

Luke 10 records Jesus' parable of The Good Samaritan. Jesus told this parable to teach the application of the Gospel to our conduct toward one another. The Samaritan, the last man in the world one would think would compassionately minister to a severely wounded Jew, did exactly that. And, I might say, he did so at great risk (the robbers might have remained close by and attacked him,) and at

significant financial cost to make sure the wounded Jew received proper medical and physical care. Jesus says to you, "Even as I have loved you, love one another." (John 13:34) St. Paul wrote, "To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some." (1 Corinthians 9:22)

Prayer: Give me, O Lord, a heart of love and compassion toward my neighbor for Jesus' sake. In His name. Amen.

Rise, shine, you people! Christ the Lord has entered Our human story;
God in Him is centered. He comes to us, by death and sin surrounded,
With grace unbounded.

See how He sends the pow'rs of evil reeling;
He brings us freedom, light and life and healing.
All men and women, who by guilt are driven, Now are forgiven.

Come celebrate, your banners high unfurling,
Your songs and prayers against the darkness hurling.
To all the world go out and tell the story Of Jesus' glory.

Tell how the Father sent His Son to save us.
Tell of the Son, who life and freedom gave us.
Tell how the Spirit calls from ev'ry nation His new creation.
(LSB 825)