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April 7, 2002

Who Are You Going to Please?
Romans 15:1-6

INTRO: Some years ago the late Ricky Nelson wrote a song titled "Garden Party," the song is about an experience he had at Madison Square Gardens; and in the song, he says: "you can't please everyone, so you've got to please yourself." Those words reflect the attitude of our humanistic society, but they do not reflect the principles of scripture. Romans 15:1 says that we who are "strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." Then note what verse two says: "Let every one of us [Christians] please his neighbor." Now look at verse three, "For even Christ pleased not himself...."

Romans 13:8 tells us that we have a debt that needs to be paid; and to pay that debt, we must be givers not takers. We must please others, not ourselves. "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another." Over and over, we are told to love one another. We are told to love others lest we become self-centered, pleasing self only.

To do what is taught in Romans 15:1-6 means to go against the grain of modern society. It means that we must swim upstream going against the flow.

Who are you going to please? If you do what Christ did (vs 3), you will choose to please and glorify God.

I. VS 1a, CARE FOR OTHER FOLKS

A. What are the strong to do? They are to bear the weaknesses of those without strength, the weak.

1. Those who are strong are tempted to throw off the weak, to discount them, to disassociate themselves from them.

2. Paul encourages the strong to help the weak, to bear with them, to stretch out their hand to lift them up.

a) The word for "bear" in this verse is the Greek *bastazo* meaning, "to take up in order to carry, to support."

b) Remember this, your strength can compensate for someone else weakness.

B. Discipleship involves learning from the Master, and the Master teaches us to help others, to bear their burdens (Gal 6:2).

1. We are to simply tolerate the weak brother; we are to carry him.

2. Of course, we cannot encourage or tolerate sin, but that is not what is in view here. Yes, the weak brother may fall. When he does, encourage him to do right, but do not encourage him to go on living in sin.

II. VSS 1b-2, DON'T PLEASE YOURSELF

A. Vs 1b, It must be understood that, "to be self-centered and self-seeking is natural to our fallen nature. But we ought not to use our strength to serve our own advantage" (Stott 309).

1. The cry of the natural man is, "I'll do my own thing; "I'll please myself." The motto of the Christian ought to be, "I'll help others."
2. In Philippians 2:21, Paul is concerned that those in leadership, those who should be caring for the church were all tied up in their own interest for he says: "For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's."
 - a) As Christian soldiers, we are not to get so tangled up in the material that we cease to be good soldiers of Christ (II Tim 2:3-4).
 - b) Much of what folks do today in the interest of their bank account, their pleasure, their business, etc. Few today care about others.
 - c) Don't you believe it is time for you to get right with God?

B. Vs. 2, This verse is to be carefully read. Notice that it says, we are to please our neighbor, and we are to do so "for good to edification."

1. Neighbor pleasing and men pleasing are not to be confused.
 - a) Neighbor pleasing is commended in God's Word (Rom 13:9).
 - b) Men pleasing is condemned in God's Word (Gal 1:10; Col 3:22).
 - (1) To please men means to flatter them to get their approval.
 - (2) Those who please men are willing to compromise. This is not pleasing to God, nor does it build up men in things spiritual.
2. When we please our neighbor in the way that Paul is talking of here, we will please God and build up those we are helping (Rom 14:19).
 - a) Encouraging people in sinful practices does not edify them nor does it help the church.
 - b) We are to look out not for our selfish interests, but for the needs of others and for the work of Christ (Phil 2:2-4).

III. VS 3, HAVING THE MIND OF CHRIST

A. This verse tells us how we ought to think, how we ought to act for it points us to our example, the Lord Jesus Christ (Phil 2:5-9).

B. Christ pleased God. "Instead of pleasing himself, he gave himself in the service of his Father and of human beings" (Stott 370).

1. Christ was faithful to His Father (Heb 3:1-2).
2. He loved the will of God and came to earth to accomplish the task of dying for the sheep (John 4:34).
3. He came to do the will of God not His own will (John 6:38-40). We too should seek to do the Lord's will. We should pray, "not my will but thine be done."

C. The last part of this verse is a quote from Psalm 69:9.

1. Christ refused to please Himself; He pleased His Father.
2. Because He so "completely identified himself with the name, will, cause, and

- glory of the Father that insults intended for God fell on him” (Stott 370).
3. He suffered for the Father; He suffered for us (Isa 53:3-5).

IV. VS 4, ALL SCRIPTURE IS GIVEN BY THE BREATH OF GOD

- A. Paul’s quoting of Psalm 69:9 leads him to say that all of the Bible is important to us.
- B. The scriptures were written for our instruction; they were written to teach us about Christ (Luke 24:27). Thus the Word of God can make us wise unto salvation (II Tim 3:15).
- C. The Word of God was also written for our comfort, for our help, and for our encouragement (Isa 26:3).

V. VSS 5-6, A BENEDICTION THAT IS AN ADMONITION

- A. Vs 5, We will not always agree on everything, but we are to agree doctrinally, we are to agree on the fundamentals of the faith.
 1. Salvation by grace+ Eph 2:8-9; Titus 3:5.
 2. Baptism for believers only (Acts 2:41).
 3. The necessity of the Gospel being preached (I Cor 15:3-4) etc.
 4. All we do spiritually ought to be “according to Christ Jesus.”
- B. Vs 6, If we are not in unity of mind about who Jesus Christ is, the unity of heart and mouth in worship will not be possible.
 1. We can lift our hearts and sing “Amazing Grace” because we believe it.
 2. If we are self-centered, we do not have the mind of Christ; and we cannot glorify God in worship.

CONCLUSION: Who are you going to please? God or self!