

A. THE SIGN THAT WE LOVE ONE ANOTHER—THAT WE BELONG TO THE LORD—IS THE WAY WE TREAT ONE ANOTHER (:1-3)

1. It All Starts W/Those Who Are Strong (:1a)

- a. We're talking about those who are strong in faith & strong in grace (re. foods - ch. 14)
 - 1) to be strong in faith means that you are more sure of God's faithfulness - His ability & willingness to fulfill His promises - than you are of your own name
 - 2) to be strong in grace means that you've grown beyond the idea that you could ever do anything to deserve God's mercy
- b. The strong ought to bear w/the scruples of the weak
 - 1) bear w/= bear the load, as a burden (eg. Matt. 3:11 J.B. & Jesus' shoes)
 - 2) scruples = *asthenema* = error arising from weakness of mind / thinking
 - 3) some people aren't so sure that God's gonna do what He's promised / or they haven't yet found that place of rest in His grace - they still feel like they have to do/not do something before God will accept them
- c. (NLT) "*We may know that these things make no difference, but we cannot just go ahead and do them to please ourselves. We must be considerate of the doubts and fears of those who think these things are wrong.*"
 - 1) the strong believer ought to carry the burden of the error in the weaker one's thinking...

2. It Starts W/The Strong, But It Filters Down To Each Of Us (:1b-2)

- a. Edification = building up / promoting growth in another
 - 1) we're in the construction business - did you know that?
 - 2) our job is to build each other up
- b. Our job is not to please ourselves, but to please one another
 - 1) that's hard to do - our tendency is to please ourselves, even if it means tearing someone else down...
 - 2) but it's what we should do = imperative/instruction

3. (:3) The Blueprint We Work Form In This Building Project Is Jesus

- a. Don't you ever wonder how He did it? • He took the hard road - He did what He did knowing full well that He would be scorned, ridiculed, hated, humiliated an ultimately, murdered - crucified
- b. Why did He do that? • How did He do that? • Wow COULD He do that?
 - 1) 1st of all, He did it 'cuz that's what He came to do
 - 2) 2nd of all, He did it by being strong: strong in faith & strong in grace
- c. How do you become strong?
 - 1) physically, we know that strength comes thru proper nutrition & exercise
 - 2) spiritually, it's no different - you get strong thru proper nutrition & exercise - but somehow, somewhere along the line, we got the idea that physical strength was more important than spiritual strength
- d. The sign that we love the Lord, belong to the Lord, is the way we treat one another- not living to please ourselves, but bearing each other's burdens / building each other up

B. THE STRENGTH TO TREAT ONE ANOTHER AS WE SHOULD COMES FROM THE WORD

1. (:4a) Everything In The Bible Is There For Our Benefit

- a. All the O.T. stories, the N.T. letters

2. Knowing The Scriptures Develops Patience (:4b)

- a. Patience = Endurance / Steadfastness • patience in struggle

3. Knowing The Scriptures Also Give Us Comfort (:4c)

- a. Comfort = Encouragement / *paraklesis* = alongside ("c'mon - you can do this")

4. The Result Of Endurance & Encouragement Is Hope (:4d)

- a. Hope = expectancy / anticipation (Xmas morning)
- b. We can put up w/almost anything if we're convinced it's worth it

5. Another Benefit Of Knowing The Scriptures Is Unity (:5)

- a. As we're all grounded in the word, steadfast & encouraged, growing stronger in faith & grace, following the example Jesus set for us, we grow together in unity
 - 1) (Ephesians 4:11-16)

6. The Result Of All Of All Of That Is That God Is Glorified (:6-7)

- a. What we're really talking about, another word for strength, is maturity
 - 1) maturity comes about by studying God's word - soaking it up/letting sink in
 - 2) the result of maturity, in turn, is that God is glorified
- b. When, in the strength & maturity of the word, we accept/receive/embrace one another in the name of Jesus, God is glorified

7. (:8-12) Make A Point That, While Maybe A Little Obscure To Us, Would Be Glaringly Obvious To The Readers In The Roman Church: I.e. The Example Of Jesus Being A Servant Of The Jews In Order For The Gentiles To Praise God