

For Christ Pleased Not Himself

1 We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. 2 Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. 3 For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me. (Romans 15:1-3)

Bare ye one another's burdens.

The consideration that I have as I look at this passage is that the entire **focus of our lives is to be the exact opposite of how we usually live our lives.**

We naturally live our lives selfishly, we live our lives putting ourselves first most of the time. Rare are the times when our thoughts are toward others and Paul makes it again clear in this passage that **this is our duty in life.**

Pauls life was this way.

Paul spent the balance of his days living his life for the sake of others, spending his life and his days with the consideration of the spiritual well being of others and not for himself. But in this passage he does not give us himself as the prime example, **but Jesus Christ.**

CHRIST PLEASSED NOT HIMSELF!

"Ought", A Moral Absolute

*1 We then that are strong **ought** to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.*

Its an incredible word "Ought", it's like the word "Should", it's an objective word not a subjective word. It's not a word based on person preference, it's a word based on an absolute authority.

To say a person OUGHT to do something presupposes a moral authority, a basis from which it stems. Which is why the question 'Why ought I do such and so' would come up.

A **reason is searched for** that gives a foundation for the "OUGHT".

"Why OUGHT or SHOULD I do that?"

The word 'Ought' originates from the English word 'Owe'. If there is a debt we OWE, then we OUGHT to pay it, one naturally follows the other, **it is absolute.**

But the world now lives in a morass of self contradiction now that it has given up absolutes.

An absolute moral standard that has its foundation ONLY in an absolute moral authority. But the what disappears when civilisation gives up God, they also give up the very foundation of morality, everything is relative...

And there you go, I just gave you a self contradicting statement that describes a lost world.

EVERYTHING is relative....EVERYTHING!... ?

A relativistic, subjective society can never give you an OUGHT.

They can have no absolute reason for saying you OUGHT to do this or that if they hold to no objective moral truths. And when this is taught in schools, **it is a matter of time before entire civilisations collapse**, and we are seeing it before our very eyes today.

In their Book, ***“Relativism, Feet Firmly Planted in Mid Air”***, Dr’s Francis Beckwith and Greg Koukl recall the LA Riots of 1992 saying;

“As the buildings burned we watched with horror. Shops were plundered not by hooded looters but by families made up of mom, dad, and the kids— moral mutants on the shopping spree of their lives, giggling and laughing with impunity while stuffing their spoils into shopping carts and oversized trash bags. We shouldn’t have been surprised. During the L. A. riots these families did exactly what they had been taught. Nobody wanted to “impose” their morality on anyone else, so they learned that values are relative and that morality is a matter of personal preference. Make your own rules, define your own reality, seek your own truth. In the spring of ’92, thousands of people did just what we told them to do, and civilization burned.”¹

We reject moral absolutes, we reject the absolute authority that gives foundation to the word “OUGHT” and “SHOULD”, and then we wonder how the world has turned upside down.

We lie but despise being lied to, we steal but think it unjust that people steal from us, we swear and take offence at a vulgar bumper sticker.

We think there is no right or wrong but are the first to complain and not getting the correct change in a store or return a defective purchase.

CS Lewis perfectly describes the hypocritical position the world finds itself in, in his book, ***The Abolition of Man;***

¹ Beckwith, Francis J.; Koukl, Gregory. Relativism (p. 25). Baker Publishing Group.

“We laugh at honor and are shocked to find traitors in our midst. We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful.”²

No beloved, the word OUGHT is not an option but an absolute.

We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

Our Obligation to Support The Weak

I We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

“Don’t forget me cobber”.

It was known as Australia’s blackest night.

The 19th of July, 1916 A Victorian farmer by the name of Sergeant Simon Frazer would be caught up in what is to this date the worst 24 hours in Australian military history, The Battle of Fromelles, France in World War 1.

It was the first major battle fought by the Aussie troops on the Western front, and it was a disaster.

Over 5,500 Australian Casualties in one night; more than the Boer war, Korean war and Vietnam wars combined.

That night the sergeant could hear a call on the German side of no-mans land, it was a call for help from a fallen soldier. Sergeant Frazer wrote in his letter home saying “I remember we could hear someone, over against the German entanglements calling for a stretcher bearer”.

Sergeant Frazer went out and found a large wounded man, over 90 kg in weight, he couldn’t carry him but managed to get him into a trench while he called for help. But this was not where he heard the voice.

About 30 yards away he heard the man sing out “Don’t forget me cobber”.

The original statue is still located in Fromelles, France, but a replica of it can be seen in Birdwood Avenue, Shrine Reserve in Melbourne.

It’s a statue of a soldier in his late thirties carrying across his shoulders a unnamed wounded man. That soldier was the Victorian farmer Simon Frazer, 39 years of age, who

² C. C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (New York: Collier Macmillan, 1955), 35.

selflessly returned to the most dangerous part of any war to retrieve a dying man, an area between two enemies known as 'no-mans land'.

Sargent Frazer would not return to farming in Victoria, he was killed the following year at the second battle of Bullecourt on May 12 1917, aged 40 years and his body was never found.

*We then that are strong **ought** to bear the infirmities of the weak*

The "Ought" is not an option in this passage of the bible, **it was not an option for Simon Frazer**, it was and is an obligation, and ABSOLUTE.

There will always be those weaker than you are, there will also be those stronger than you. **But strength of faith differs from physical strength.** Frazer could not physically bear the burden of one soldier while he could another, but to him it was never a question of ability, **but of the WILL.**

Strength of faith can be seen in the most physically frail of people and it is that strength that is able to *bear the infirmities of the weak*, that is, **the weak in faith.**

Paul spent the entire previous chapter writing of those who are weak in faith and dealing with the arrogance of those who are strong in faith. The strong was to care for the weak, not to despise them as the manner of many were.

Imagine for a moment Sergeant Frazer who, in his strength, despised the desperate call of a fallen fellow soldier! Imagine him thinking that if the man wanted to live he should crawl out on his own.

There are those Christians who are indeed weak in their faith and there are times we are going to need to **go out and look for them**, lift them up, bear them across our shoulders and carry them to safety.

This is our OBLIGATION TO SUPPORT THE WEAK.

And don't think this only applies to those who have been long term lacking in their faith, weakness of faith can come upon the strongest of us.

Paul referring to himself to the Corinthians wrote, "**who is weak and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?**" (2 Cor 11:29), Paul suffers just as others do at times, both in faith and offence. **But it takes a diligent ear to listen for the singing out of 'Don't forget me cobbler'** especially from those who are in reputation strong in their faith.

You see, even in war some of the most able and toughest **soldiers get caught in a cross fire.**

Perhaps it wasn't that they were weakened through a lack of exercise and training, **just in the wrong place at the wrong time**, or just caught off guard, and a good man or woman falls.

As Christians, **none of us are immune from going through hardships**, times when our faith fails us, times when trial and pain (emotional and physical) overwhelms us, yes even the seemingly strongest of us, it often takes only one difficult event to throw us out of the way and cause us to stumble and fall.

I don't know what kind of farmer Simon Frazer was, I don't know if it was livestock or grain. But what I do know is that **he had an ear and sense tuned to the cries of help** and believed it was his obligation that he "**Ought**" to help.

No doubt there were other soldiers in the camp, but only he was immortalised for future generations as unique among his comrades in arms.

Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. 4 No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. Writes Paul to Timothy in [2 Tim 2:3-4](#).

Soldiers don't just fight, **there are times they also rescue**, there are times they *bear the infirmities of the weak*

There are times each of us are going to be strong, and it will often come at times where others of us are weak.

Don't forget us brother or sister, don't leave us behind enemy lines, especially when we are in pain or in trial, **it will be in those times we need you who are strong to help bear our burden.**

Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. ([Gal 6:2](#))

Our Duty to Surrender Our Wills

I We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

All of this assumes of course that we are **willing** to surrender our own wills, *and not to please ourselves.*

It's not only that we "Ought" to bear the infirmities of the weak, but in order to do so we also "Ought" to **not have** as our first priority to please ourselves.

This absolute command is not unique to this passage, in fact it seems to follow as naturally as possible the “*Golden Rule*” of Christ to “*do unto others as you would have them do unto you*”, it is a rendering of the exact words of Jesus on the Sermon on the mount, turn there with me to [Matt 7:12-14](#)

“Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets”

Just as you think this to be a simple task, note what he says in the very next verse that concludes the thought paragraph;

¹³ *Enter ye in at **the strait gate**: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: 14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

The idea is evidently not one that is **followed by many** and yet it is not an arbitrary command, it is an “ought”, it is that which is **morally absolute** and **should** be followed by ALL people.

Imagine for a moment the sort of world we would have if this “*Golden Rule*” were actually followed by ALL People? How great would the world truly be.

The first thing that would go would be that which Paul states in Romans 15, our first thought would be *not to please ourselves*. Our thoughts would be on others, and we would do this first because we would also desire their thoughts to be on us.

Lets confirm this doctrine shall we?

[1 Cor 10:24](#)

24 Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.

[1 Cor 13:5](#)

4 Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, 5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; 6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; 7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

[1 Cor 10:33](#)

33 Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

Now we are beginning to see a reasoning behind this selflessness, a reason as to why we OUGHT to think of others before we think of ourselves in all matters.

Turn back to;

1 Cor 9:19-22

*19 For though I be free from all men, yet have **I made myself servant unto all**, that I might gain the more. 20 And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, **as under the law**, that I might gain them that are under the law; 21 To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. 22 To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: **I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.** 23 And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.*

During some counselling this week I asked a question;

Of all things that you can do in your life that will matter the most to others, what would it be? In other words, what is the single most important thing you can do in your life that will make a difference to someone else.

Almost as quick as I asked it the reply came back to me, “Share the Gospel”, “tell people about Jesus”.

If you want to know what your calling in life is and what you yourself are particularly set aside to do that no other person on earth can do as you do, it will be that which surrounds what Jesus came and died for, the Gospel.

This is the epitamy of a selfless act, this is the first and foremost place in which you do that which has as its focus someone else for their eternal good, nothing else can even come close to the Gospel, this is the greatest OUGHT of all.

Sure, be sure to feed them.

Yes, be sure to care for their needs

Absolutely, help their infirmities and do all you can to take care of their well being.

Give them clothes to warm them, shelter to cover them, water to quench their thirst, food to feed their needs....BUT ABOVE ALL, if you have a thought for their temporal care, NEVER LET IT ESCAPE YOU THAT YOU ‘OUGHT’ TO CARE FOR THEIR ETERNAL WELL BEING AS PRIORITY.

Tragically, this one simple command of Christ is the one single effort that Churches have long forgotten about.

The Salvation Army began as a Christ Cantered, Gospel preaching ministry that saved the souls of multitudes, it was an **ARMY of people** who had the message of SALVATION, just as the title states. Its focus was the Gospel, **just as you would expect from the Evangelist WHO BEGAN THE WORK**

Consider some quotes of the famous evangelist;

"Some men's passion is for gold. some men's passion is for art. some men's passion is for fame. my passion is for souls" ~ William Booth

"If I thought I could win one more soul to the Lord by walking on my head and playing the tambourine with my toes, I'd learn how!" ~ William Booth

"If you want to change the future, then you are going to have to trouble the present." ~ William Booth

"Most Christians would like to send their recruits to Bible college for five years. I would like to send them to hell for five minutes. That would do more than anything else to prepare them for a lifetime of compassionate ministry." ~ William Booth

"I am not waiting for a move of God, I am a move of God!" ~ William Booth

"The greatness of a man's power is the measure of his surrender." ~ William Booth

*"While women weep, as they do now, I'll fight While little children go hungry, as they do now, I'll fight While men go to prison, in and out, in and out, as they do now, I'll fight While there is a drunkard left, While there is a poor lost girl upon the streets, While there remains one dark soul without the light of God, **I'll fight-I'll fight to the very end!**" ~ William Booth*

What we had in men like William Booth, were those who's only pleasure was not for themselves, and who's ears were fitly tuned to hear the cries of dying men and women and children saying **"don't forget me...."**.

How many do we forget as we walk right by them? As we talk to them?

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Why do we do this?

We do this because Jesus set our example.

Of all the people in the world there is none that could have ever been seen to be perfectly content and perfectly satisfied and perfectly comfortable and in perfect fellowship than God.

There was no need to make man in his image.

There was no need to see him rebel against his maker
There was no need to see the trouble and violence in man
No need to begin again with a new set of people
There was no need for him to choose a nation to bless
There was no need for him to see them also rebel against him
There was no need to attempt again and again to restore them to himself
There was no need to send his only begotten Son into the world to demonstrate the Love of God
There was no need for that Son to be killed by the very ones he came to save
There was no need for Christ to rise and to trouble himself to save the world from the punishment of the sin they love.
There was no need to watch the world fall again into total disarray and apostacy.
There would be no need to deal the final death blow to the wicked and give the world one last chance of 1,000 years of blessing.
There would be no need to begin again with a new heaven and new earth were perfect righteousness and joy remains for ever.

God the father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit had all they needed for eternity past to continue to eternity future without needing to put up with you and I and all that came of us.

For even Christ pleased not himself;

The question of why he elected to do so is not the subject of this sermon, though the question is certainly a valid one, but Paul shows to us the prime example of one who had NO ADDITIONAL BENEFIT FOR CREATING MAN, but only trouble to date, yet he pleased not himself but did all he did for our future hope.

John 6:37-38 Jesus said *All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. 38 For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.*

In this we see with complete clarity that the will of the father was for the salvation of the Lost, the Gospel.

In *John 4:34* when Jesus was speaking of his Gospel to the woman at the well, his disciples came to him and told him to eat of the food they brought, but;

Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

His food, the very product of all that sustains Jesus **was to do his fathers will**, that Gospel for which he came.

It's as if he heard our cry down through the ages, "Don't forget me...", its as if Jesus mind and heart was tuned to the desperation of the loss, not of life, but of eternal life in the hearts of billions of people over the next two thousand years, he heard them *"Don't forget me..."*

You might see him turn, you might see him looking for you, you might see him reach down and take you up onto his shoulders to bring you to safety. Not to do his own will, ***For even Christ pleased not himself***

Let's turn to see how real that was.

Turn in your Bibles to [Matthew 26:36](#)

36 Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. 37 And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. 38 Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. 39 And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. 40 And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? 41 Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. 42 He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. 43 And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. 44 And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.

[Luke 22:44](#) gives to us the agony of the record as Jesus *“prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground”*

Sergeant Simon Frazer was taking a risk heading back into no-mans land to save the life of a soldier. There was a risk he would be shot and lose his life for the sake of another man, but Jesus knew what would befall him.

It was a cup he would drink only because it was not his will but the fathers.

He sweated great drops of blood demonstrating the most terrifying level of stress a person can experience.

Historically it is a level of stress that is often seen among those on death row, it is a malady called Hematidrosis, it is very rare but also very real. Where the blood vessels that feed the sweat glands rupture, it is caused by **extreme physical or emotional stress**.

Jesus knew it, three times he asked the father to remove the cup from him, but he knew he OUGHT to do his fathers will,

For even Christ pleased not himself

- It wasn't just the mocking's, he knew they hated him because they hated his father, *The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.*

- Jesus bear the reproach of those who hated his father, but it wasn't just the demonically inspired mocking's and beatings to he feared.
- It wasn't the spitting, nor was it them pressing the crown of thorns into his scalp, nor was it them pulling off his beard.
- It wasn't just the Roman scourge, even Paul the Apostle had greater rights than Christ to avoid the Roman scourge. But though he knew they would tear the flesh from his bones through that act, that was **not the only reason he sweated blood**.

It might seem incredible to you that it was not even the crucifixion itself that caused great drops of blood to pour from his sweat glands.

The Romans were economical in this form of capital punishment that demonstrated every part of the utility of the cross was to cause as much pain as the body can bear for as long as possible.

The word expressing the severest pain in the English language is the Latin word **Excruciate**, which has its origin in this method, Ex Cruciate simply means 'of The Cross'.

The thick nails driven through the wrist pierced the median nerve with severe pain and left much of the hand itself without feeling.

I worked in my fathers Butcher shop when I was a boy and remember how easily a 200kg animal can hang on a single hook when it was pierced in the proper manner.

The Romans knew this all too well. No ropes were needed to hold a man to the Cross.

But add to this having to exhale the air from his lungs while pressing down on his feet with a large nail that had torn through the metatarsal bones in his feet and we can see how this tool might indeed be that which can cause such severe stress.

But it wasn't **ONLY** the torture of the cross that caused this fearful malady.

There would be an episode that no man can ever experience that Jesus would. An event **that has never occurred before in human history** and would never occur again.

In all eternity, it would be **the first time** the Son of God would ever experience it and none of us could ever imagine what that must have been like for him.

It would be when Jesus experiences **for the first time in eternity past** being forsaken by the father.

“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

Never had Jesus felt as if he was separated from the father but then.

At the very culmination of the work he came to do, not for himself but for you and men, Christ felt forsaken of God.

How many times did we read of God saying of his Son, *“this is my beloved Son”*, how often was the father proud of the Son, but now the Son has taken on the sin of the world and has become Sin, judged upon the cross.

Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree writes Paul in [Gal 3:13](#) reflecting [Deut 21:23](#))

3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed ([Isa 53:3-5](#))

For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.

There can never be a greater example of a selfless act than that of Jesus Christ for you and I, it was what he OUGHT to have done.

“Don’t forget me cobber,” the cry rang out from hell

That was Fromelles bloody battlefield, where five thousand diggers fell

The soldier froze in his retreat, then turned to face that voice

And ran back to save his wounded mate, he knew he had no choice

That plea made so long ago, has echoed down through time

It’ a comfort when someone is there, when your life is on the line

Though they may pay the highest price, in answer to that call

To lay down your life for a fellow man, is the greatest gift of all

Jesus could not forget you and I, it was his ought to save us from the penalty of sin and he paid the highest price to answer the call.

For greater love hath no man that this, that a man lay down his life for his friends (Jn 15:13)

How much do you think of others in your day to day life?

Enough to give them a call?

A text message to let them know?

Do you front up to their door to lend them a hand?

Do you bring some food around, or cut their grass?

When their anxieties are going through the roof in this world, do you tell them about Christ?

Or do you see them and just pass by, and just wave at them in the rear view mirror?

Compare how often you have determined to please yourself first, and then compare it to what you ought to do.

The lesson for us in the first verse of this fifteenth chapter is clear;

I We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

Think on this, this week, this month, this year. And think of how Jesus didn't forget you or leave you behind.

He is coming for you again you know? Be sure not to miss him!

Maranatha