

Romans, pt.22, 15.1–12, 5.13.07

The Strength Test

Introduction

1. Kids love showing off their strength; even adults like showing off their strength (tenacity, acumen, hobbies, etc.)
2. The strength test
 - a. Define spiritual strength – knowledge, perseverance, faithfulness, ministry results, passion or strong personality.
 - b. In this passage, spiritual strength is defined another way, as in acceptance, kindness & gentleness with others.
 - c. How strong in the Lord are you?

ARE YOU CONSIDERATE OF OTHERS? (15.1)

- This isn't referring to courtesy or proper manners.
- Review the context & last message. These verses are a continuation of 14.1–23
 - Review points from last week's message
 - Critical: There are essential & non-essential beliefs
 - Don't condemn one another in areas of Christian liberty
 - Critical – We can quickly quench the work of God in someone's life when we condemn them in an area of Christian liberty.
 - Recognize & affirm the other person's desire to honor the Lord
 - Live your convictions on non-essentials
 - Critical – We hurt people, run them off, bind them up when we speak of our convictions as though they are essential Christian doctrine.
- Many reasons why people quit coming to church...one is b/c they feel judged by a person or group.
 - Sign: Whites only. Blacks not welcomed here. How does that make you feel? It is sickening. We would never think about turning our backs on an African, Asian or Latin American if

they came to church today...what about the brother or sister in Christ who comes to church and we intentionally ignore, don't include, that we refuse to acknowledge...what's the difference? We're saying the same thing, "Get out of here...you don't belong here."

- GKGW: You must be thinking about the other person?
 - Being mother's day, this is a good day to start thinking about the other person, especially if that other person is mom!
- Answer the question. Are you considerate of others? The "strong" person knows how to be considerate.

ARE YOU BUILDING PEOPLE UP? (15.2)

- Knox translation: Everyone must try to please his neighbor, to do him good, and help in his development.
- We must please others. He isn't referring to people pleasing which tries to curry favor with a person through insincerity, manipulation or flattery. The Bible flatly condemns this but commends believer pleasing.
- He is stating we must be believer pleasers...**when it comes to accommodating their needs...placing them before you**...we are to look after their interest before our own... especially in areas of Christian liberty.
- This shouldn't be done in a spirit of resignation or frustration but in humble love & sincerity.
 - Christ didn't come to please himself (15.3f.). He set the standard; he humbled himself; he was insulted for us...
 - The story of two congregations that tried to form one in order to have a stronger witness. They couldn't keep it together even after one month. They disagreed on the recitation of the Lord's Prayer. One church said, "Forgive us our trespasses..." and the other said, "forgive us our debts..." This proved to be too big an obstacle so they split back to their original congregation. The local paper reported this incident and said, "One church went back to its trespasses and the other returned to its debts."

- They found it difficult to accommodate/build up the other.
- You have to know what's essential & non-essential.
- Do you build people up into the image of Christ or try to beat them up into your own?
- Building people up helps in their development into Christ likeness
- Stephanie is a real encourager
- Answer the question. Are you pleasing/building up other believers?
The spiritually strong do

ARE YOU LIVING IN HARMONY WITH ONE ANOTHER? (15.5-6)

- Learn to live in harmony with one another...this is a great prayer
- Harmony isn't sameness but differences working together; When we are in harmony with one another then we join together as "one voice giving praise & glory to God." Harmony isn't just a nice societal ideal, but it has enormous spiritual ramifications. Ps.133 & John 17 & 1 Cor.12 give us compelling reasons to walk in harmony.
- The praise team & instrumentalist all working in the same flow...when they are in the flow together it's easy to follow & enjoy...
- As you consider the people in your life, are you in harmony with them? When you're out of harmony you know it; it doesn't sound right.
- Appl - if you knew you had 24 hours to live what would you do or say? This reveals some of your character & the priorities of your life. The last things a person says are critical. Jesus prayed that we would be one (John 17)...it should be important to you.
- The church value of unity
- If you aren't living in harmony, then you have to take action...the Bible says, "if you know someone has something against you or there is some type of relational barrier then take intention steps to reconcile the differences."
- I realize sometimes you can't do anything about the lack of harmony b/c of the other person's attitude toward you
- How strong are you in this area? Are you living in harmony?

ARE YOU ACCEPTING ONE ANOTHER (15.7)?

- Jesus came & served. He accepted both the Jews & Gentiles in all their diversity & shortcomings.
- He has accepted us despite our sins & mess, bad attitudes, sorry excuses, weakness.
- This was played out in a huge way in October

On the morning of October 2, 2006, a troubled milkman named Charles Carl Roberts barricaded himself inside the West Nickel Mine Amish School, ultimately murdering five young girls and wounding six others. Roberts committed suicide when police arrived on the scene. It was a dark day for the Amish community of West Nickel Mines, but it was also a dark day for Marie Roberts—the wife of the gunman—and her two young children.

But on the following Saturday, Marie experienced something truly countercultural while attending her husband's funeral. That day, she and her children watched as Amish families—about half of the 75 mourners present—came and stood alongside them in the midst of their own blinding grief. Despite the crime the man had perpetrated, the Amish came to mourn Charles Carl Roberts—a husband and daddy.

Bruce Porter, a fire department chaplain who attended the service, described what moved him most about the gesture: "It's the love, the forgiveness, the heartfelt forgiveness they have toward the family. I broke down and cried seeing it displayed." He added that Marie Roberts was also touched. "She was absolutely, deeply moved by the love shown."

"Amish Mourn Gunman in School Rampage," USA Today (10-7-06); submitted by David Slagle, Atlanta, Georgia

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- Therefore we are to accept others; it's a heartfelt acceptance...it's an embrace.
- There were some major differences of beliefs in this church & Paul encourages them to embrace the differences.
- How strong are you?

Conclusion:

How did you do on the test?