



# THE EXHORTER

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***“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40***

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## JUMP START #395

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**Rom. 15:1- “ Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves.”**

This verse is one of those relationship passages that remind us that we are connected to each other. We need each other, whether we want to admit it or not. Often it's the “not” category for most of us. Certainly, on Sunday worship we need a preacher, song leader, and someone to get the Lord's Supper ready for the rest of us, but that's about the extent of it. Through the week we get along pretty good on our own. Who are we kidding? We need each other all the time. We need the prayers of others. We need their encouragement. We need to know that they are there for us. And they need us.

Romans 14,15 are chapters about this connection. One of the things a person finds out very quickly is that not everyone thinks the way I do. Some are different. Some come from different backgrounds and some have had different experiences. The Roman church had a mixture of Jewish and Roman backgrounds. This mixture was upsetting because not everyone did the same things. Some could eat meats, some couldn't. Some observed special days, others didn't. When the “dids” and the “didn'ts” got together, it caused raised eyebrows, whispers and judging. The immediate thought is, because you are different, you are wrong. Wrong is a favorite word of many people. Their definition of “wrong” is anything that I don't like. The music is wrong, because I don't like that type of music. The car you drive is wrong, because I don't like that brand. You watch wrong shows on TV, because I don't like those shows. This spills over into the spiritual. You are wrong spiritually, means to some, you are sinning. Some use the expressions, “wrong,” and “you are sinning,” to get a person to do what they want them to do. It's the ultimate gift—GUILT. It's the gift that keeps on giving. They pressure, they talk, they judge ( a real problem here in Romans) and they condemn. Eventually, if you don't change, they stop having anything to do with you.

Religious people like to judge. I've noticed that. I fight that. One reason is that we care for others and we don't want them to be “wrong” (there's our word again). God has a place for judging and as a church we have to. Fellowship is determined by walking in light (1 John 1:7). How do we know who is walking in the light and who is in the dark without some examination or judging?

All of this brings two central thoughts for us:

- 1) It is God who determines what is right and what is wrong. That was the problem in Rom. 14. God had accepted the weak and the strong. You may do something that I don't like and in my thinking, I'd never do it myself, but there is a difference with dislike and sinful. Sin is a violation

of God's law. Putting the label "sinful" on something doesn't mean it is. God determines what he accepts and what he doesn't. There are some things that are not sinful, even though I don't like them. That's hard for some of us to deal with. It was hard for the Romans, that's why we have two chapters on this stuff. It's wrong because God's word says so, and not because I say so.

- 2) We ought to spend more time judging ourselves than the rest of creation. Some can be so quick to point fingers and shout "that's wrong," yet do they do that to themselves? Some seem to be so worried about what other churches are doing, what's going on in other congregations, more than what's going on in their own hearts. The emphasis in the NT is looking intently at the perfect law of liberty. Doing this will cause us to examine ourselves and make adjustments to please God.

Our verse today shows these thoughts. First, quit pleasing yourself. Quit just thinking about yourself. It's not always about ME. That leads me to learn to bear the weaknesses of others. This is not tolerating sin. God wants us to repent of sin, not to "bear" sin. Weaknesses are things that conscience won't allow a person to do. Not sinful, just dislikes. My grandpa would never cut his yard on Sunday. That's just the way he was. It could be that Sunday was the only day it wasn't raining, he still wouldn't cut it on that day. Is it sinful to cut grass on Sunday? No (unless you skip church and that's another problem). We all have things like that. I don't like preaching without wearing a tie (and it best be a good one). Is it wrong to preach without a tie? No. I'm certain that Jesus never wore a tie. It's just me. Now I know some preachers that never preach in ties. Are they "wrong"? No. Are they sinning? No. I'm the same way about wearing blue jeans to church services. Wrong? No. Just me. Now how am I to act towards those who come Sunday, without a tie and wearing blue jeans? Do I roll my eyes and avoid them? No. Who is weak on this? Them or me? I'm not sure, it may be me! I can pressure them to change and they can pressure me to change. We can get so tense that we split and have a "tie only, no blue jean church", and a "no tie, only blue jean church." To that, Jesus would roll his eyes. Get along is the message. If it's not wrong, then quit acting as if they have done something wrong.

Some come from work straight to church services wearing nursing uniforms and other outfits that they are required to wear at work. We can roll our eyes and wrinkle our lips at them and in disgust say, "why don't they go home first and change," (which probably means they wouldn't be able to make it at all) or we can be thankful that at the end of a busy day they made time for the Lord.

The list is long on our differences. We are not all the same. It helps to remember that God has accepted us as we are, quirks and all, and we need to do the same with others.

We need each other! We all need Jesus!

Roger Shouse

**Some additional thoughts:**

**Monday-** Acts 2:44-47

**Tuesday-** Rom. 14:7,8

**Wednesday-** Rom. 14:10-12

**Thursday-** Rom. 14:13

**Friday-** Rom. 14:17,18

**Saturday-** Rom. 14:19

