

Romans 14 Disputable Matters

We have seen so far in our study of the book of Romans that chapters 1-11 very doctrinal –

A) But starting in Chapter 12 – Paul shifts his focus – to the Practical or applicational

B) How the gospel transforms our relationships with ourselves, other Christians and the World around us – Friends, enemies

C) As we come to Chapter 14 Paul is going to apply all that he has been saying to a specific problem in the church in Rome –

D) How to have Grace and wisdom in disputable matters!

Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. 2 For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. 3 Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. 4 Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

5 One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks. 7 For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself.

8 For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. 9 For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living. 10 But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. 11 For it is written:

“As I live, says the Lord,
Every knee shall bow to Me,
And every tongue shall confess to God.”

12 So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. 13 Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a

stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way.

¹⁴ I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that *there is* nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him *it is* unclean.

¹⁵ Yet if your brother is grieved because of *your* food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died.

What was the problem? It is that Christians are failing to “stop passing judgment” on fellow Christians when it comes to “disputable matters”

V.1 Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things.

A) Doubtful things are things that are not black and white in scripture.

B) things that are not clearly right or wrong but are more matters of personal discretion and conviction.

1) What is ok for me might not be ok for someone else – even though the Bible doesn't clearly distinguish.

C) Such issues today: Theological - What form of baptism, eschatology, sabbath keeping, Days of worship,

D) Cultural issues: Christians and Alcohol consumption/ Movies/ Secular music, tattoos watching sports

1) Examples of disputable matters in the Christian world today

In the church in Rome in Paul's day the issues were eating of meat vs not eating of meat – (you thought the vegan thing was new idea)

2 For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables.

A) here is a spirit of rejection instead of acceptance within the church.

B) Another issue was the esteeming of one day over another day as it related to worship.

1) Another issue seemed to be the drinking of wine!

C) These disputable matters were creating a spirit of rejection instead of acceptance within the church.

D)The basic issue is that some of the church members cannot distinguish between matters of basic principle and of individual preference.

The Church that God had assembled in Rome consisted of 2 very different groups of people

A)On the one hand were the Gentiles who had been saved out of their gross paganism / idolatry & immorality .

B)And on the other hand were the Jews who had been saved out of their rules & ritualism

C)The Controversy centered around the fact that many of the Jewish believers - because of their dietary laws - had chosen to become vegetarians

1)They literally felt it was still unclean to eat foods that were forbidden under the OT regulations

D)While the gentiles believers who were not reared w/ those customs & laws - thought it was silly not to eat meat.

The point is there are always going to be controversies over doubtful things –

A)The question is how do we deal w/ them rightly?

V.1 Receive one who is weak in the faith.

B)Notice Paul shows us what it means to be “weak” or “strong.” In verse 3 he says

3 Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him.

C)This is something I find really interesting that Paul makes this distinction between those who are weak & those who are strong.

D)This might be surprising but Paul labels those who are more rigid - more strict – THE WEAK

1)those who said we could only eat Veggie’s as the weak brothers

Now that is surprising to many of us!

A)I think it is our naturally tendency to think of the person who is so disciplined –

B)The person who seems to make a big deal out of gray areas – that guy is really spiritual

C)Those guys are so radical – so holy

Then we think that the guy who is more free fun loving – enjoying life and food.

A)Doesn’t seem to have many restrictions – Steak sure – Ice Cream Sunday bring it

B)We say – that guy is kind of liberal – not that spiritual – not that disciplined as the weak one

C)Paul says the opposite is true

D)Paul doesn’t call the non-weak Christians “strong” until 15:1, but the description is useful all the way through chapter 14)

Paul shows in Ch 14 that the “weak” person loses the focus of the gospel—we are not accepted by God because of dos and don’ts.

A)The strong believer is someone who knows they are saved by the gospel,

B)and therefore understands that there are areas in which they are free—for instance, in eating meat.

C)So there in Rome the weak Christian was saying: *We must not eat meat—it is wrong,*

D)even though Christ had said that his people are free to eat any food (Mark 7:14–23;

“Hear Me, everyone, and understand: ¹⁵There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man. ¹⁶If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!” Mark 7:14

Later the Holy Spirit would tell the Apostle and Peter in a vision **to kill and eat – a blanket full of unclean animals – Jews were forbidden to eat previously**

Paul’s refers to Christ - words in Romans 14:14a). ¹⁴I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that **there is nothing unclean of itself**

So the strong Christian was saying: *We’re free to eat meat!*

Paul addresses the attitudes of both the strong and weak in V.3

- A)The strong brother is not to despise the weak one as being legalist & narrow minded
- B)Nor is the weak brother to adopt a bad attitude of contempt toward the stronger brother –
1)by labeling him as carnal & worldly
- C)Paul says to both understand that God has received that person.
- D)What Paul is essentially saying here is it is not your responsibility to change your brother –
1)for he is not your problem- He is not your servant - but he belongs to God

Paul dealt with a similar issue in Corinth – Eating meat offered to idols

- A)Best cut of meat in the market at the best price was meat offered to an idol
- B)Some of the believers who came out of that lifestyle – felt like to eat that meat was partaking in or supporting idolatry
- C)Others were like – An idol is nothing but a piece of wood/ and it is a great cut at a great price/ I am buying it!
1) Paul handles the conflict in Corinth in a similar manner
- D)Here in Rome it was eating meat period – Veganism vs Carnivorism

Paul says that the strong and the weak are not to follow their natural inclinations when it comes to each other.

- A)V.3b -13a Paul mainly addresses the the attitude of the weak and then in v. 13-21 He addresses the attitude of the strong
- B)When a weak believer (one who isn't convinced or his liberty) condemns the strong – here is what they are forgetting

#1 God accepts us all on the basis of Christ performance and not our own!

- A)Paul reminds them V.3 – God has accepted them – His child

B)Justified by faith – period – not our works or eating habits

#2 They have forgotten that God is the only judge

V.4 4 Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

A)Verse 4 is a strong warning against denouncing a Christian who differs from you in a matter of conscience.

B)The word “judge” here does not mean a simple evaluation but a condemnation and denunciation.

So if another brother or sister has a different conviction on an issue than you do – don't judge them outwardly or in your heart!

A)They belong to Jesus (his servant) He can deal with them if they are in error

#3 They have forgotten to think through their own position. 5 One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.

A) Verse 5 is quite interesting and important: “Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.”

B)In other words, Paul says that we need to think out our behavior. –

1)Accurately study the scriptures to come to a conclusion

2) is this a matter of law or is this a matter of liberty or choice?

C)Think through the issue contextually – clearly!

Example of not doing that: On the issue of Christians and Alcohol consumption –

A)Those who are against it often quote: Proverbs 31:4 – Not for Kings to drink wine! –

B)Or Ezekiel 44:21 – Priest are not to drink wine.

C)Argument – the Bible says – that we are Kings and priest therefore we shouldn't drink alcohol.

1)Ok makes sense right – well not so fast

Now I believe there are some great arguments for not consuming alcohol –

A)but those scriptures are not them here is why:

B)To simply quote it like that ignores the context –
1)For Kings context is in relationship to his duties – ie while on the job – **it continues lest he forget his decrees –**

C)Context is a King needs to keep clear headed

The exhortations toward Priest not drinking clearly says: they are not to consume wine before they enter the temple.

A)Don't have a glass of wine before coming to church. Conclude – any other time is ok.

B)Another thing that argument ignores is that Jesus the King of Kings and our great High Priest – consumed wine

C)Jesus was never accused of being a tea toteler – but we was accused of being a wine bibber

1)And he did turn 6 33 gallon size water basins into wine at a wedding - (**7 day feast**)

D)Now don't get me wrong here: I am not advocating for alcohol consumption – It can be very dangerous – Bible is clear drunkenness is a Sin!

1)But I am advocating for clear Biblical exegesis and for forming our convictions based on the right things.

#3 They have forgotten to think through their own position

#4 The forth thing we can forget is that Christians can have differing opinions about something and yet both can be perfectly right with the Lord.

6 He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks. 7 For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. 8 For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

Now I will be honest – there was a time in my walk where I felt that people who disagreed with my convictions – lesser believers or in error

A)Remember meeting a couple of Pastors who disagreed with my eschatological position – Pre-Trib Rapture – scripture is clear

B)But they held a different position – thought – How stupid! Really ?–

1)in my immaturity didn't want to be their friends.

C)But we were sort of forced into a position where we had to be around each other.

1)These guys love Jesus – they radiate Jesus – God is using them BIG TIME

D)They don't seem to be hung up on this – why should I be! –

Today I have many Pastor friends who disagree with my position on several Biblical matters that – I would say are non-essentials –

A)Great friends – and we rarely ever talk about those things

B))We all belong to the Lord – God's Kids – rejoice in that – Love each other – which essentially what Paul says as he wraps up his words to the weak V.9-13

9 For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living. 10 But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. 11 For it is written: "As I live, says the Lord, Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God."

The thing that matters most is our relationship to God

A)V.12-13 is a summary statement that addresses both the Strong and the weak -

12 So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.

B)All of us have to answer to God for our actions- give an account – that is a sobering thing to consider

1)affect not our salvation but definitely our reward and fruitfulness

C)Wood hay and stubble vs gold silver and precious stones- the key is our motives and attitudes in what we do.

So Paul concludes his teaching to the weak with

13 **Therefore** let us not judge one another anymore, **(Weak stop judging those who don't share your conviction)** but rather resolve this,

Let's consider what Paul says to the strong:

13 Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way.

A) **To the Strong – don't cause your brother or sister to stumble or to fall away by –**

B) **flaunting of making a big deal of your liberty in this issue.**

C) the word for "*stumbling block*" means something carelessly left about over which someone stumbles,
1) A cause is literally a cause to fall

D) **We must determine not to be a willing or unwilling cause of a weaker brother's stumbling as we exercise our Christian freedom.**

E) Paul's teaching to the Strong

14 I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that **there is nothing unclean of itself;** (Nothing wrong with meat) but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. (His convictions- not wrong for him) 15 Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died.

16 Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; 17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. 18 For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men. 19 Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another. 20 Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense. 21 It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak. 22 Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. 23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.

Now often when this idea of putting a stumbling block before someone or causing a brother to sin – The strong will say

A) **My liberty isn't causing anyone to sin – they are not sinning by eating meat –**

B) **But what I am doing in danger of doing is causing them to sin against their own conscience – they follow my example**

1) If the guy is thinking – I really shouldn't be digging into this burger – but Rob is and I don't want him to think less of me

C) I am stumbling him by causing him to sin against his own conscience

23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.

Now often when this idea of putting a stumbling block before someone or causing a brother to sin – The strong will argue or question in this way

A) **My liberty isn't causing anyone to sin- let me use the alcohol example again.**

B) **The mature brother is thinking: My exercising my liberty didn't cause that person to start abusing alcohol or even drink!**

1) **They are still holding to their own convictions**

C) **All my drinking did was anger them or offend them!**

1) **That is their problem and not mine.**

Paul would argue not so! –

A) **Paul argues in our text that if we are going to walk in love – we need to be concerned about grieving and offending our brother or sister**

15 Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love

Aa) **When we flaunt our liberty in such a way that causes another brother or sister to be grieved by it – we are stumbling them**

B) **We are not walking in love**

C) **Our view of stumbling needs to be expanded – we are grieving them and even causing them to have judgmental thoughts – sin for them.**

In V.21 Paul actually uses the word offended -

21 It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak.

A) So it is wrong for me to willingly eat meat in front of my brother who has a problem with it – offend him.

B) I can't just say – that is his problem he needs to grow up – not my problem he doesn't understand grace

C) I am offending my brother and that is not loving!

Paul says in v.15b that we are actually in danger of destroying a brother or sister when we do that.

Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died.

A) How is my liberty destroying someone else?

B) V.20 makes it clearer **20 Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense.**

C) Destroy = Ruin – Don't ruin the work of God – **He who has begun a good work in you....**

We can set someone back in his walk with our liberty

A) Cause someone to go backwards instead of forward – exercising a liberty that they don't have.

B) We can cause someone to get distracted with something that they don't need to be distracted with.

C) Majoring on a minor issue and it trips them up

D) And We can destroy the work of the Lord in a community or amongst our unsaved friends/family

1) When we are arguing about things that seem so trivial

So how do we who have liberty in an area walk in love as to not cause another to stumble or sin by grieving or offending a weaker brother?

A) #1 we make a commitment to walk in love in regards to our liberty

16 Therefore do not let your good (liberty in eating meat) be spoken of as evil; 17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

B) Our behavior is to be guided by what brings about, righteousness peace and joy

1) for our brothers and sisters in faith as well as for ourselves.

C) The principle which guides the behavior of the strong is not to be: *How can I enjoy my freedom in the gospel here?* but rather:

D) What will lead to peace with my brother, and the encouragement and holiness of my brother?

1) Thinking of others before ourselves

#2 The strong need to remember that they are first and foremost serving Christ V.18

18 For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men.

Because I want to please the Lord more than I want to exercise my liberty – chose to walk in Love

A) Paul in Corinthians on this issue said that that when we cause another to stumble sin against Jesus

B) All a part of His body –

1) Paul responded – I would rather forfeit my liberty than to cause another brother to stumble

19 Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another. 20 Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense.

#3 Remembering the work of God is more important than my personal preference.

A) I don't want to destroy or ruin what God is doing in them

B) And I don't want to destroy or ruin the work of God in my sphere of influence getting caught up in disputable matters

C) Know the distinction between – Right vs wrong and personal preference

How do the strong exercise their liberty and not cause the weak to stumble?

#1 we make a commitment to walk in love in regards to our liberty v.16-17

#2 The strong need to remember that they are first and foremost serving Christ V.18

#3 Remembering the work of God is more important than your personal preference. V.20

#4 The strong practice their liberty in private v.21-22

21 It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles **or is offended** or is made weak. 22 Do you have faith? **(Belief or conviction) Have it to yourself before God.** Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.

²² You may believe there's nothing wrong with what you are doing, but keep it between yourself and God. Blessed are those who don't feel guilty for doing something they have decided is right. NLT

You have liberty in a Disputable matter – Out of love practice it in private

A) Don't flaunt it – Instagram / Facebook – Paul's day –

B) Enjoying a 10oz ribeye – Whoa

C) Not an issue for us today – but in other things

1) Out of love keep it to yourself

Is that being hypocritical? No it is being loving

A) I am concerned – I don't want to stumble or cause a brother to sin in any way.

B) Sin by going against his own conscience

1) Sin by getting overtaken by a judgmental spirit

C) Sin against them by causing them to be grieved or offended.

D) Not worth it – so I am going to exercise my liberty in private.

E) Enjoy it, rejoice in it – between myself and the Lord and other – I know have that liberty