

The Book of Romans
14:13-23
05/29/2019 Wednesday PM

Introduction

- Last week we began Chapter 14 as Paul began to speak about “weak” and “strong” believers.
- In our gatherings, we have people from every walk of life and spiritual maturity level.
- This means that we are bound to differ in many areas. We must learn what are “essentials” or “non-negotiables” and what are “disputable matters.”
- Remember the principle from last week: **“In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; in everything, love.”**
- Paul uses examples of food and holy days, as examples of “disputable matters” and he teaches that we should not look down upon someone that is following their convictions when it comes to these types of matters.
- He elaborates on this teacher further in our passage this evening as we finish the chapter.

Romans 14:13-23

¹³Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way. ¹⁴As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean. ¹⁵If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died. ¹⁶Do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil. ¹⁷For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, ¹⁸because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men. ¹⁹Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. ²⁰Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. ²¹It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall. ²²So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves. ²³But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.

- **V. 13** – I first want to make an observation about Paul’s usage of the word “judgement” in this verse. This is the Greek work *krino* and it is the same word used in **1 Corinthians 5:12-13**, “¹²What business is it of mine to **judge** those outside the church? Are you not to **judge** those inside?” ¹³God will judge those outside. “Expel the wicked person from among you.”
- We must always read verses within the context of the passage that they are in. What Paul is NOT saying is, “Therefore let us stop [examining and evaluating] one another.”
- He is saying that we should stop “condemning and looking down” on one another when it comes to disputable matters. We should not become hindrances in our “brother’s” path.
- Both strong and weak Christians can cause their fellow Christians to stumble and to fall into sin.
- The strong but insensitive Christian may flaunt his or her freedom, be a harmful example, and thus offend other’s consciences and convictions.
- The weak Christian may try to box others in with petty rules and regulations, thus causing dissention.
- Paul is advocating that we be both strong in the faith and sensitive to other’s needs because we all have strong and weak areas.
- **V. 14** – Referring back here to the issue of food from **vv.2-3 and 6**, Paul states here his own conviction.
- Paul was “fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself,” but not everyone agreed as we see in **Acts 15:19-20**.
- Paul goes on to say that, “if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean.” This means that it is a personal issue, not one for the entire body of believers.
- For example, if you think wearing a hat in church is a sin, then you must not wear one, however it may not be an issue for others.
- **V. 15** – What Paul is saying here is that if the weaker Christian “is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love.”
- He is calling the church to act in love, not in condemnation over what someone eats.
- He goes on in the verse to say, “Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died.”

- To put this in today's context, just because a stronger Christian can play cards does not mean that they should do so in the presence of a weaker Christian that struggles with gambling just because they can. Same for alcohol.
- **V. 16** – Flaunting our freedoms as stronger Christians may cause others to look upon our actions in a negative way. We need to ensure that we maintain a good standing with those around us.
- **V. 17** – The Kingdom of God is not about trivial matters of “eating and drinking,” it is about righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”
- Arguing over these matters does not contribute to righteousness (a right relationship with God), peace (unity with fellow Christians), or joy (spiritual contentment) in our churches.
- It comes down to the fact that God allows certain flexibility in our lifestyle habits when it comes to nonessential matters. How we dress, what we eat, how we fix our hair...
- **V.18** – He goes on to say that “anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.”
- **What “way” is Paul talking about?** Those that understand that “the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”
- **V.19** – Our efforts should be to do everything we can to lead peaceful lives and bring about mutual edification (improvement) to the body of Christ.
- This should not be done by demolishing people, but by building them up and training them as **1 Thessalonians 5:11** says, “Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.”
- If there is “tearing down” that needs to happen, God will do that.
- **V. 20** – Paul goes on to say, “²⁰Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble.”
- We should not let such trivial matters tear apart our churches.
- He reiterates his position on food, but then makes it clear that it is wrong for us to do anything that makes another person stumble in their faith.
- Paul addresses this in **1 Corinthians 10:23-24, 31-33**, “²³Everything is permissible”--but not everything is beneficial. “Everything is permissible”--but not everything is constructive. ²⁴Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others....³¹So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. ³²Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God-- ³³even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.”
- Our mission in life should be to see as many people as possible come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.
- Everything we do should be to support that mission, not push them away.
- **V.21** – Paul makes it clear in this verse that stronger believers are called to restrict their freedoms for the sake of weaker believers.
- **V.22** – He goes on to say, “²²So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves.”
- This does not mean that you can never advocate for your belief, however Paul is saying that in times of disagreement you should remain silent so as to not cause further arguments.
- Constructive dialogue that seeks to edify the body of Christ is encouraged, arguing and tearing each other down is never ok.
- Never let the good conscience and convictions that you personally hold “condemn” you by causing you to falter.
- **V.23** – With that being said, Paul says that, “the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.”
- Going against your personal convictions that are Christ centered, can cause you to sin.
- There are times when something is wrong for us, but ok for someone else because they do not have the same issues that we have.
- We should approach our convictions of non-essentials from a personal standpoint and ensure we are personally in right alignment with God.
- All of this while understanding that not everything is essential, but not everything is non-essential either.

Next Week's Study

Romans 15:1-13