

Blessed Faith Romans 14:20-23

14:1-15:13 concerns issues of conscience in the use of Christian liberty and how we are to relate to our brethren who have different convictions about such matters

The church in Rome was composed of Jews and Gentiles. And a good number of the members were likely fairly new believers who had been raised by unbelieving parents. Tensions had probably arisen over matters of:

1. Eating meat that had been unclean under the Mosaic Law or had been sacrificed to idols (14:2, 6)
2. Drinking wine that had been offered to idols (14:21)
3. Observing special days such as the Sabbath (14:5-6)

These tensions were not like the issue in Galatia where people were teaching Gentile believers to live under the Mosaic law in order to be saved. Rather, these tensions concerned matters of conscience.

In vv 1-12, the apostle's main instructions for relating to believers with different convictions are:

1. Welcome them but not to quarrel (14:1)
2. Do not despise or pass judgment on them (14:3)

In **vv 13-23**, the apostle's main instruction is not to put a stumbling block in their way through the inconsiderate use of your liberty

Do not cause your brother to stumble (20-21)

verse 20

“Do not...destroy the work of God.”

1. The previous verse instructed us to pursue what makes for “mutual upbuilding,” the edification of our local church as the members are built up in Christ
2. This verse prohibits doing the opposite
3. **Matt. 16:18** “...I will build my church...”
4. **Eph. 2:10** “For we are **his workmanship**, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

“for the sake of food”

- For something that the kingdom of God is not about (verse 17)

What does Paul have in mind that works against what God is doing in the church?

1. Paul states it in this verse— “it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats.”
2. Verse 15 spoke of grieving a brother by what you eat
3. Loveless flaunting of liberty
4. Inconsiderate use of liberty

Making another stumble breaks them down, and in turn the church, rather than building them up in Christ

“...Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats.”

- It is now permissible to eat the foods that were unclean under the Mosaic Law, but it is wrong to makes another stumble by the inconsiderate use of this or any other liberty

verse 21

- It is good to forego using your liberty if its use would cause your brother to stumble

Appreciate your liberty without flaunting it (22)

“The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God...”

1. Faith was mentioned in verse 1
2. Not saving faith
3. Faith to exercise Christian liberty
4. This faith stands in contrast to the doubting in verse 23
5. Keep this faith, but do not parade your liberty before those who do not have this faith

Does not mean do not ever mention your convictions to those who do not have this faith, or hide your convictions. It does mean to keep between yourself and God those things that could make your brother stumble.

“...Blessed is the one who has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves.”

1. This is a believer who, by a correct understanding of Scripture, faith in God’s Word, and obedience to it, has a clear conscience in what he does
2. The blessedness of a clear conscience

Be considerate of your brother's conscience (23)

verse 23

Question: Verse 23 teaches that everything we do is to proceed from faith. What does this mean? Consider the preceding context.

“But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith...”

1. Doubts that it is acceptable to God
2. He is sinning (see the rest of this verse), and is condemned/judged by his conscience (cf verse 22b)

“...For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.”

Does not mean our conscience is the standard for how we are to live. The standard is God's Word.

1. We are to always be seeking to inform our conscience with the Word of God (12:2), and to be strengthened in faith by His Word
2. When we see in God's Word what is right and wrong, but our conscience contradicts, we are to listen to God's Word instead of our conscience
 - **1 John 3:19–20** “By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything.”

Does mean that as we are renewing our mind with Scripture, and have a sincere conviction based on Scripture that something would not be pleasing to God for us to do, it would be sinful to go against that conviction

Question: In what ways should verse 23 affect our daily lives?