

Romans 14:13-23

The apostle Paul has been explaining why the Christians at Rome were supposed to love rather than judge one another with regard to matters of ‘opinion’.

He exhorted the ‘Weak’ and the ‘Strong’ to respect one another's convictions with regard to ‘debatable matters’ (**Rom. 14:1-12**).

Believers are not to judge censoriously but rather to leave the evaluation of one another's practices in these matters of differing opinions to Christ.

Paul does not center on the matters of food and drink, but on Christ.

As we focus on Christ, our goal is to edify the church, not tear it down.

Summary

In Romans 14:13-23, Paul continues his explanation on scruples and gives an exhortation primarily to the stronger brother though there is also an implicit rebuke to the weaker brother.

1. Sacrificial Love vv. 13-19

Paul told the believers at Rome, that they were not to judge one another concerning matters of opinion, because each one of them would eventually have to account for their conduct (**Rom 14:12**).

Hence he counsels: **Rom 14:13-14** Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother. I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean.

Christian liberty does not mean that we are free to exercise it irresponsibly.

Paul will eventually state that Christians are supposed to approach all things in faith.

Here he focuses on the necessity of love (**Rom. 14:15**). The apostle once again appeals to Christ as the foundation on which Christians base their conduct.

He appeals to the resurrection of Christ and His lordship over the church as the grounds for both the strong and weak to respect one another's convictions.

Paul then reminds the strong of the big picture (**Rom. 14:16-17**).

He urges them to serve Christ in the building up of the church (**Rom. 14:18-19**).

2. Living by Faith vv. 20-23

Paul highlights the reality and significance of our behavior in the church when he reminds the strong of the potential impact of their irresponsible exercise of Christian liberty (**Rom 14:20-22**).

Paul reiterates the point that Christians must live by faith in all things (**Rom 14:23**).

Paul primarily deals with the stronger brothers here but we must not miss Paul's implicit exhortation to the weak (**Rom 14:14, 20**).

Whilst it is true that the strong must love the weak and exercise their liberty with caution and discretion, the weaker brother must determine if his conscience is genuinely offended?

Nevertheless, Paul tells the stronger brother, "It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble" (**Rom. 14:21**).

Church life is not one of isolation; each one doing as he pleases.

It is lived in community and connection with one another (**14:22**).

3. Proper Perspective

Ultimately Paul is not concerned about food and drink or special days but rather the redemptive work of Christ and the kingdom of God.

This passage is ultimately about what our justification and sanctification free us to love, to be living sacrifices.

The extent to which we demonstrate love to our weaker brothers and sisters shows how much we understand and appreciate Christ's costly sacrifice.

If we understand it well, we will have no reservations and hesitancy about the careful exercise of our Christian liberty.

It is nothing to sacrifice the consumption of food or drink for the edification of the church.

Paul poses the opposite choices between destroying or edifying the church

(1) he instructs the strong not to destroy the weak (**Rom. 14:15; 20**)

(2) he encourages the strong to pursue peace and the edification of the church (**14:19**).

Are we working to build the kingdom of God or destroy it?

If we understand that Christ has inaugurated the final age and He is in the process of building the final temple made of believers, living stones, we will do everything we can to build up that the temple and not tear it down.

We must not lose the centrality of Christ and His kingdom.

If we are looking for vindication for our consumption or avoidance of food or drink, or observance of special days then we have missed the whole point.

Love Christ's body, both weak and strong, in the same way that Christ has loved you.