

Stop Tripping over Opinions

Roman 14

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When the Restoration Movement began in our nation in the early 19th century their slogan was: In essentials unity, in matters of opinion liberty, in all things love. This is the movement from which independent Christian churches, Disciples of Christ and Churches of Christ emerged. People wanted to restore the church back to the Bible. The Bible would be the only creed. They understood that when it comes to our Christian faith, we must be united in the essentials; but when it comes to matters of opinion there is freedom. Today there are people who confuse their opinion with the essentials of theology. *As followers of Jesus, we must be able to know the essentials from the non-essentials of our faith. The non-negotiable from what is negotiable.*

There was some tension in the Roman church over matters of opinion. In this chapter you can clearly see what the issues were that created such tension among these believers. This conflict was between two groups which Paul addressed in this letter. The strong in faith versus the weak in faith. These two groups were being judgmental toward each other and Paul rebuked their attitude.

Rom.14

Paul started talking to the strong in faith, the more mature (accept, welcome those who are weak in faith) without being judgmental over matters of opinion (disputable matters)

Weak in faith: those who do not think their beliefs allow them to do certain things.

The issues at the church in Rome (v.2-3)

Eating or not eating certain food

-The strong in faith believed they were free to eat anything (any meat)

-The weak in faith only ate vegetables.

They were being judgmental toward each other: (v.3)

The person who abstains from eating everything must not condemn the one who eats everything. (v.3)

Don't judge each other over matters of opinion because:

-Both person belong to the same Lord (master)

God has accepted both the one who is strong in faith and the one who is weak (v.4)

They both are God's servants; they are serving the same Lord.

The observance of certain days (v.5-7)

-One person considers one day more sacred than another; another person treats every day alike.

To this attitude Paul responded: **each person should be fully convinced in his understanding.** You must have a clear conviction in your reason for treating the day this way.

Whatever you do, should be done to honor God (v.6-12)

-If you're going to treat a day special, do it for the Lord.

-If you eat meat, eat to honor God, giving thanks for his provisions. If you refrain from eating do this to honor the Lord and give thanks to him.

Whatever we choose to do, we must remember our new identity in Christ. (v.7)

We belong to him and we must always honor him with our lives. Whether we live, or die is to honor God. (v.8)

Christ's death and resurrection made him Lord of both the dead and the living.

He is our Lord, which means we don't belong to ourselves. We are here for him.

He is the ultimate judge to whom we all (whether we are strong in faith or weak in faith) must give an account of our lives to him. (v.12)

Rather than being judgmental, make up your mind to not make anyone to stumble (fall) (v.13)

Paul's observation: I am persuaded in the Lord that no food is unclean. Paul may have had in mind the words of Jesus himself. **Matt.15:11** *What goes into someone's mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them."*

No food is unclean, but if you regard it unclean for you it is unclean. (v.14)

Do not cause your brother to stumble because of what you eat.

If your brother is distressed by what you eat, then you are not acting in love. (v.15)

Do not destroy your brother or sisters by what you eat, but rather build them up. God's kingdom is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. **Therefore, anything that creates quarrels and judgmentalism does not help to build God's kingdom but hinder its advancement.**

Instead of being judgmental, we must strive to do what leads to peace and mutual edification. (v.19)

Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. (v.20) Make up your mind not to destroy God's work for the sake of (*non-negotiable*): _____: *food, clothes, music, building, etc.* _____ I have seen churches split over music,

stained glass windows, pews over chairs and so forth. People destroy God's work over matters of opinion.

Paul gave them the final instructions regarding not being a stumbling block to those who are weak in faith. (v.20-15:4)

-All food is clean, but it is wrong for a person to eat anything that would cause someone to stumble. (v.20) (It is better not to eat or drink anything what will cause your brother to stumble.

Example: the gathering deciding not to have wine because of a brother was attending.

v.22-23 *Blessed is the man who does not judge himself by what he approves, but the one who has doubts then is condemned if he eats because his eating does not come from faith and everything that does not come from faith is sin. (this goes back to what Paul talked previously about being fully convinced about what you choose to do).*

Those who are strong in faith have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please themselves. Bearing with the failings of the weak is not doing anything that would cause your brother or sister to stumble.

The more mature are to act like Christ toward those who are weak in faith. (v.3 Even Christ did not please himself)

v.4 Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

Paul's prayer for these Christians calls for unity and acceptance. 15:5-6

It is this unity that will bring glory to God, not the fights and quarreling over things that are not essential. This is why Paul has been pleading: **Accept one another, just as Christ accepted you (15:7)**

Application: It was food and holidays became objects of division at Rome. As Christians we must know our essentials, so we can know what it is we can agree to disagree on. When it comes to non-negotiable things in church, we should accept by not being judgmental. **Make up your mind** to build your brother or sister up and not to tear them down.

Think about God's kingdom: his kingdom is bigger than your opinion. We accept each other for the sake of God's kingdom; whether we like pews or chairs, whether we sing hymns or contemporary; whether we eat meat or not. Whatever we choose to do, we are to do it for the glory of God. **Colossians 2:16-17** 16Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or about a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. 17These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

