

Glen Park Gospel Church
Tuesday Evening Bible Study Group Notes

Rev Chris Trinham

Studies in Romans Series 6

No 32

Preferring One-another

Scripture Reading: Romans 14

Chapter fourteen begins with a 'hidden' conjunction of contrast, 'and' or 'but', only translated in some English versions as 'Now', which contrasts our urgent personal participating in overcoming the flesh at the end of chapter thirteen, with our personal acceptance of those who differ with us in how we express our faith. This conjunction of contrast is important:

But, accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. Romans 14:1.

It is possible that Paul had in mind eating food formerly offered to idols and wine as a pagan libation (1 Corinthians 8:4-13), but the lack of any reference to it in Romans 14 suggests that he is discussing personal choice.

Undoubtedly this was an issue in the church at Rome in that there was a significant Jewish component with their background of ritual observances of food and holy day regulations. Because Paul devotes so much space to it, we see that the question of every Christian's freedom to serve God from his heart was important to him. This chapter then is an instruction about our personal devotion to Jesus Christ and our mutual toleration of each other within the bonds of Christian faith and brotherhood. Our victory over sin by the crucifixion of the flesh through faith is mandatory, yet our tolerance of weaker faith in others is necessary. What is meant by weakness?

Some Found Things to Forgo. For whatever reason, important to them, they found that there were certain things that they could not do, or eat or drink (v6) despite that other Christians were doing them. This rankled them.

Some Sought to Forbid Those Who Were Free.

To forbid is to disallow or veto and this takes place in three steps.

1. Observation and evaluation.
2. Consideration and decision.
3. Communication and censure.

They saw the issue as one of obedience and disobedience and if disobedient then sinful; but obedient to what? The probable answer is - the laws of Moses and his followers. Paul saw these groups rather as being strong or weak in faith.

The weak were those who had to depend upon their observance of the law and its rituals. The strong in faith were those who could trust in God through the message of the Gospel. The weak in faith sought righteousness through the symbols. The strong in faith trusted God's naked word.

Now the weak strongly forbade the freedoms of the strong, judging them to be in error. They were not to judge someone who was the servant of another v4, i.e. God, for God Himself is the One who will do that in due course, and meanwhile give the other grace to continue as a Christian v4&12.

The Strong were told to Forebear.

A point to notice in v 1 is that this teaching is addressed in the first

place to the strong, and then to the weak. They were expected to lead in the reconciliation for they had more fully learned to trust in God. They were to accept the weaker brethren as equals; not look down their nose v3.

But Who is Right?

Reading v5 and v14 we might say,

Both are, truth is whatever we see it to be:

One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind v5

The Bible does not teach that truth is negotiable, but Jesus, taught that someone who is ignorant of his transgressing is guilty but not as culpable (ie, *deserving* of guilt or censure) as the one who has been enlightened. Consider:

Jesus said, That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked. Luke 12:47&8.

Read also; John 9:41, James 4:17, and John 15:22.

It is obedience to what we know that is the question, not a definition of truth. Each believer obeying Jesus Christ as they personally understand.

Bible quotations in this study are from the NIV, unless otherwise acknowledged.

Is this logic also true of the lost?

Jesus answered that question in John 3:14-21 Our context is the obedience of those in the body of Christ..

Christian Liberty

Jesus and Paul both taught that it is not the substances which are wrong (maybe often not advisable) but the attitudes and actions of our heart that can defile us. Matthew 15:10-11, 1 Timothy 4:4, for it is the hearts of men that are evil, not this material world.

Setting Stumbling Blocks v14.

The stumbling block is what you see to be right, but your brother does not. Your demand that he conform is making him go against his conscience. Possibly even your demand that you exercise your liberty is violence to his faith. In this case, demanding liberty through faith is sin, forbearing by observance can be graciousness.

Jesus is Lord. Isaiah 45:22-25.

The Lordship of Jesus is confirmed by His death and resurrection. As Lord, it is Him to whom we all must answer, both whilst in the body, or when we stand before Him in eternity v9. Therefore have no right to judge one another: that prerogative is His.

Welcome

Glen Park Gospel Church

Lower Road, Eltham North

Sundays 10.30 am

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