

Glen Park Gospel Church
Tuesday Evening Bible Study Group Notes

Rev Chris Trinham

Studies in Romans Series 6

No 33

Preferring One-another: Part 2

Scripture Reading: Romans 14

In our last study we covered verses 1-13 and saw that in Rome there were two groups. The first, Paul said, were weaker in faith because they depended on the observance of regulations about food and holy days to aid them in their Christian life and faith. The other, he indicated were strong because they trusted the word of God alone. The weaker were critical of the freedom of their brothers; who in turn looked down on their 'weaker' brothers and sisters. Neither, he said, were to make their own view a stumbling block to trip up the other's style of faith and service.

Are there any principles of conduct which we can apply to help us avoid offending one another?

First, Emphasize the Blessings We All Share v16-19.

God's children share together in the:

Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. Ephesians 1:3

This blessing is not temporal or a passing thing like food, but that which builds in us a life acceptable to God.

First, righteousness v17. This word has in modern media, unjustly acquired an association with hypocrisy. Nothing is further from the truth. It means being sound as a bell. If a bell has a crack or flaw it will not sound a true note. Try it with a china tea cup from a set where one has a crack. Notice the different sound. The gospel makes guilty twisted men right again.

Second, peace v17. Its meaning is harmony, tranquillity, safety or health. Set this against the threat of adversity, insecurity and fear which was our lot before, and which characterizes so much of the world in which we live. Because we know that our affairs are safe in the hands of God, come what may, we can rest secure.

Third, joy v17. Joy is happiness or

gladness. Joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit but here comes from a spirit which is holy. Most versions read 'joy in the Holy Spirit'; see John 7:38&39. But it can also be translated 'joy because of a holy spirit', that is our spirit made holy by God's full regenerating power, similar to 2 Timothy 1:7. Which ever way it is to be read, we as Christians ought to be filled with joy - you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy 1 Peter 1:8.

Righteousness, peace and joy then characterizes our service toward God and our encouragement of others. Do you know this fruit in your experience? Then do not destroy it in the lives of your brothers.

A Word to Those Who Keep Ceremonial Practices v13-16.

Beware of judging others v13.

Judgment can be a harsh criticism, putting someone else in their slot or simply having a preference. That is scope of meaning of the word Paul uses. The verse begins with a therefore, for the instruction is a conclusion drawn from the knowledge that the Lord is the One to whom we

must all answer. We have no right to put our view in the way of the expression of the service of another. Each will give answer to God for himself.

We know that no good food is materially unclean v14. Read Mark 7:14-23 Jesus taught his disciples that it was not the food that men eat makes them unclean, but the evil expression of their hearts. Paul is reinforcing this teaching. In 1 Timothy 4:4&5 he tells us that if we can eat with thanksgiving then it is acceptable. Therefore if you prefer to abstain from a particular food, then you have no right to make an issue of it to someone else.

If your preference is hurtful to someone else, then this is not an act of love v15. Properly expressed, love is that which keeps the whole of the law Romans 13:9&10.

Every sincere Christian serves God from the heart and that is good v16. Yet sometimes it is done in a way that differs from someone else. If a

Christian insists that others do things like him, and it becomes an issue; then that good thing will become an object of derision and division. Then that which is good has become an object for evil.

The Strong Are to Submit to the Weak v20-23.

First, don't let temporal things destroy the service which someone else gives to God (that is, their righteousness of life, peace of heart and their rejoicing spirit) v20.

Then, those who have the strength of naked faith also have faith strong enough to trust God in the matter of the observance pattern of their brothers. This is an act of love in the interests of the weaker believer v21.

Third v22. Our 'I can, therefore I will' attitude does not speak in love. We may not be condemned in eating or drinking but we will be answerable for an uncaring, unloving spirit that does despite to the hearts of others.

Danger Men at Work! There is a danger in some of these verses. May we call it to your attention. Some think that sin is only sin if it is seen to be sin. This goes too far.

As 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 v14. See also v23.

'Unclean' is from *koinos* and also has the meanings of common, impure or unholy. It is substandard, not promoting spiritual health. Therefore it is not to be desired. There is a stronger word for unclean, *akathartos*, as for unclean spirits or filthiness. Sin is from a different word again, initially meaning 'to miss the mark' but in the Bible indicates the inclination and practice of evil stemming from a nature that is at enmity with God.

If some thing prevents us from serving God fully trusting Him in our heart, then it is not of faith in God, but faith in our own wisdom or actions. Put up the caution sign:

'Danger Men at Work.'

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

Welcome

Glen Park Gospel Church

Lower Road, Eltham North

Sundays 10.30 am

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