

Romans 14:13~23

There are some things we know are wrong, because the Bible clearly condemns them. Other's we know are right, because the Bible clearly commends them. But what about those areas which the bible is not so clear on? Or what about those things that are difficult to understand, issues that there is a divided opinion about, as such is the case here with the meat and the days. What about the things that the bible either doesn't speak to at all, or speaks very little to, leaving us to wonder whether it's right or not?

Here in our text, we find that the believers in Rome were divided over *special diets* and *special days*. Some of the members thought it was a sin to eat meat, so they ate only vegetables, while another part saw no problem with it and ate meat. Some thought it was important to show respect for certain days, while others treated every day as the same. Each man had a completely different take on the matter; they stand at opposite ends on this issue. They were divided over the matter, which made for a possible problem between the two brethren.

At first, this passage may seem that this passage has little or no relevance to us. While we may not be divided over *meats* or *the observance of certain days*, we have plenty of issues that we don't see eye to eye on.

Is it right for a Christian to...play cards...to play pool...go to the movies...to play bingo...to smoke...to eat in a restaurant that sells alcohol...to work on Sunday...for women to wear pants... The list goes on and on. Issues that have resulted in believer's *being deeply divided*. So much so, that I'm convinced this plays a major part of why there is so many different denominations. It's one thing to be divided over "*Doctrinal*" issues (which we should if it is not according to scripture) but quiet another if it is over these "*gray areas*," things where the bible is simply not clear on. If you've been a Christian very long, you realize that there's a lot of these "*gray areas*." And it depends on whom you ask, of the answer you get.

P: But the point here is, We must not allow these differences *come between us*...

We must not allow these issues that we are divided over...*divide us*.

Anytime you have *opposing views* on a matter, anytime two people come together with completely different perspectives on an issue, there is a great potential for problems to arise between the two. One may become very critical of the other, one may Judge the other...making for a very real and potentially serious problem. The differences can easily create *animosity* and *dissension* between the two...

Q: Faced with the CERTAINTY that we will not always see things the same way, knowing there are things that we will not see eye to eye on, how do you keep a spirit of unity, peace & love among the brethren?

By heeding the counsel Paul gives leading up to this chapter, which he "*sums up*" in one statement.

¹⁴But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.

"Put on"... (clothe yourselves) *with the Lord Jesus Christ. "Walk in Christ likeness!"*

The point here is that we walk in a way that is "*becoming of Christ*." Walk in the same "*Spirit*" that He walked in, which is in contrast to "*Walking in the Flesh*" that Paul speaks of here. The term "*Flesh*" is what Paul uses to refer to the *depraved, sinful nature* that is within all of us! Our fallen *human nature, the flesh*, dictates that if we think we're right, we're usually ready to fight over it and refuse to bend an inch.

Paul exhorts us to "*put on the Lord Jesus Christ*," so that we won't give place to the ugly, unloving ways of the flesh, in the church. Beloved...if we're not careful, we'll find ourselves *walking in the flesh*,

resulting in a wrong spirit towards our brother. Rather than *loving our brother*, in spite of our differences, we'll be found "*criticizing, judging and condemning*" our brethren as a result of our differences.

Example: It 's vital to see here, that the one who refused to eat meat, and was convinced it was wrong. He could not fathom the thought of a true believer eating such. By refusing to eat, he felt confident he was doing what was pleasing to God. And no doubt, when he saw his brother eat meat, he'd condemn him in his mind, passing judgment on his brother's actions, seeing his brother as "*unspiritual*." But guess who the "*unspiritual*" one is here? You got it, the one who wouldn't eat. No so much because he wouldn't eat, because Paul makes it clear, whether you eat or not makes no difference. His problem was he was walking in the flesh, manifested by his "*judging*" and "*condemning*" of his brother.

That's what "*taking up the cross and following Christ*" is all about! Taking up the cross is dying to self, crucifying self, putting to death the flesh, so that Christ can reign as Lord of your life. You cannot serve two masters. We either walk in the flesh or in the spirit...

The first step in keeping unity within the church is that we portray a "*Christ like Spirit*" by "*accepting*" each other, in spite of our differences. Christ didn't come criticizing us, judging and condemning us! I am so grateful that God doesn't condemn or judge us, for if He did, who would be able to stand?

It's important that we understand the context here; Paul isn't talking about willful sin! God forbid that anyone would try and justify what is clearly sinful! Nor is this someone trying to justify their actions, what they are doing. The context here is that of two "*born again*" believers, two brothers who have been gloriously saved by the grace of God, through the gospel of Christ! The context here is of two brothers, who "*both deeply love the Lord,*" but have completely different opinions on certain issues. Using the meat example, one feels its wrong to eat it, thus he won't touch it. While the other sees nothing wrong with it, and eats all meats.

P But the point we must not miss here is, that even though they are at opposite ends on the matter, God accepts and is pleased with both men.

(Vs 3) *Let not him that eats despise him that eats not; and let not him which eats not judge him that eats: for God hath received him.*

You say, how can that be? Doesn't one of them "HAVE TO BE" wrong?

(5~9) Paul explains this... He says that both men are doing what they "THINK" is right, and pleasing to God. The one, who eats, does so in respect to the Lord, giving thanks. While the one who doesn't eat, does so in respect to the Lord. Either way, both men is seeking to honor & reverence God with their lives.

Isn't that the "*indented end result*" of the entire word of God? In verse 9, Paul points out that, that was the whole reason Jesus died, and rose again, so that *He might be Lord of men's lives!* Both of these men were at opposite ends on the matter, but in both cases, neither man was seeking to please his personal desires, but rather each man had the Lord in mind, considering what was pleasing to Him!

How can you **fault** a man who is diligently seeking to follow his convictions, and to live his life in a way that is pleasing to God? Regardless of what he believes...how could you **fault** him?

You see, the problem is...we sometimes loose sight of "*who we are and what we are...*" Beloved, we are sinners among other sinners. The church consists of sinners, who have been saved by the Grace of God. That's all we are, and all we'll ever be. None of us who have the right to judge another.

(Vs 4) ⁴*Who art thou that judges another man's servant? to his own master he stands or falls. Yea, he shall be hold up: for God is able to make him stand.*

We are no man's judge... Our brother is not responsible to us!

Paul says, *to his own master he stands or falls.* Yea, he shall be hold up: for God is able to make him stand. The only person he is responsible to... **is the Lord!** Certainly not us, we didn't die for him! Paul goes on to say, that if he is in the wrong, the Lord will take care of it. The Lord will work with him and change his heart.

Knowing that WE are all sinners, spared only by the grace of God, simply servants of the Lord Jesus Christ! Knowing that Christ is Lord... Paul reaffirms his point by asking...

(Vs 10~11) ¹⁰*But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at naught thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. ¹¹For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.*

Rather than concerning ourselves with "judging others," we need to be concerned with our own selves, and the fact that we will be judged!

(Vs 12~13) ¹²*So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. ¹³Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.*

¹³*Let us not therefore judge one another any more...* First of all, it's not our place to judge...that belongs to the Lord Jesus alone. Secondly, it's ungodly! God has shown nothing but love and mercy to us! God is so good to us, He is so full of grace and pity. When we judge and condemn our brethren, we are nothing like God. God loves His children. He would never criticize and condemn His children, that sounds more like the enemy speaking!

... *but judge this rather...* Paul says, if you insist on being a *judge*, if you are determined on discerning between what is right and what is wrong... then judge yourself! Stop looking at the splinter in your brother's eye and look at the beam in your own! Stop judging your brothers ways, and start judging your ways! Rather than being so concerned about your brother and what he is doing, you need to be concerned about your ways, and what you are doing. Make sure you're not guilty of doing anything to hurt your brother!

(Vs 14~23) Paul wraps up his point... Paul says here, "*he knows*" there is nothing wrong with eating meat...any meat. There is no doubt *in his mind* whatsoever about the issue. He even declares that the Lord Jesus has made this truth clear to him.

There is NOTHING unclean of itself... All meats are clean! There is nothing unclean. That is the TRUTH! Regardless of what anyone says or believes to be true otherwise, they are wrong. "*There is NOTHING unclean of itself.*"

BUT... at the same time, it is WRONG for those to eat it, if they are not fully convinced of that fact. Even though (*truth is it's not wrong*) anyone who "*thinks*" it's wrong shouldn't eat it! Because to do so, would cause them to violate their conscience towards God.

²³*And he that doubts is damned if he eat, because he eats not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.*

We all understand this, you do something your not comfortable doing, and you end up feeling guilty!

Paul point is, even though something is ok, (*truth* is there's nothing wrong with it) it "*becomes wrong*" if it does harm to our brother.

(Vs 15) To do anything that would harm our brother, would be *unloving*...¹⁵*But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walk thou **not charitably***...Love would never do anything that would cause harm to their brother. Even if there's nothing wrong with it, because anything that might harm my brother is wrong.

(Vs 15b) I love Paul's subtle example...*Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.* Don't destroy him with your meat...**(for whom Christ died.)** If Christ died for him...don't you think you could at least abstain from something that bothers your brother, even though you have every right too?

If Christ "*gave up his life*" for this man, can't we at least give up "*meat*?"

(Vs 16~23)¹⁶*Let not then your good be evil spoken of:* (Even though you are RIGHT...don't turn it into something that is wrong) ¹⁷*For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.* ¹⁸*For he that in these things serves Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.*

Paul reminds us, that living a life that is pleasing to Christ, does not consist only of "Doing what is right." It's more than being right, and walking in truth...*it must be balanced with love*...

⁹*Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. (Contrasted with not "tearing down...)*

²⁰*For meat destroy not the work of God. (Don't allow "meat" to come between you and your brother.) All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eats with offence.*

Speaking to the stronger brother... "*Your right...there is nothing wrong with eating meat... BUT, it becomes wrong when what you do offends your brother.*"

We shouldn't do anything...whether its...²¹*It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbles, or is offended, or is made weak.*

²²*Hast thou faith? **have it to thyself before God.** Happy is he that condemns not himself in that thing which he allows.*

²³*And he that doubts is damned if he eat, because he eats not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.*

Beloved...we need to love one another with a "*Christ like love*..." Walking in Grace, one towards another. Not in a "*criticizing, judging, condemning spirit*" which is the fruit or the manifestation of one who is *walking in the flesh*, rather than the spirit of God. And if that be the case of any of us here this morning, than we need to repent, and ask God to forgive us and restore us to a *right spirit*! We need to ask God to fill us with the "*love of God*", that we may edify our brother rather than tear him down.