

movies. The creed becomes 'touch not, taste not, handle not.' People substitute minor matters for the fruit of the Spirit and use adherence to those minor matters as the test of righteousness." ~ R.C. Sproul

- See also Colossians 2:16-23.
 - Pursuing peace and edification (v. 19), living out right behavior – is **serving Christ** (v. 18).
 - This is doing what is acceptable or pleasing to God – what Paul calls all Christians to do in Rom. 12:1-2.
- c) **Further Exhortation to the Strong in Faith: Do Not Cause the Weak to Stumble (14:19-23)**
 - Paul echoes the commands he gave earlier (in a chiasm).
 - Pursue peace and edification (v. 19); do not destroy the work of God (v. 20, similar to v. 15).
 - V. 21 sums up Paul's call – to abstain from all practices which would cause others to stumble.
 - V. 22 "the faith you have" goes back to the idea of being strong or weak in faith (pertaining to their understanding of the implications of their faith in Christ)
 - They shouldn't be proud of having "strong faith" in front of others – they should keep that between them and God.
 - Again, there is a blessing in understanding that we have liberty from the law (22b), but there is real harm for those whose conscience prevents them from partaking.
 - This is based on a general principle: "Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin." (23b).

Schedule:

- Next week (7/6): we will have class and begin chapter 15.

Previous Handouts

- Online: www.theheightschurchmn.org/adult-sunday-school

Credits:

Main sources for outline and shared quotes are:

- *Epistle to The Romans (NICNT)* by Douglas Moo [Eerdmans, 1996]
- *Romans (IVPNTC)* by Grant Osborne [IVP, 2004]

V. Transforming Power of Gospel: Christian Conduct (12:1-15:13)

A. Exhortation to Live the Christian Life (12:1-13:14)

B. Love and Unity in the Community (14:1-15:13)

Background:

- **Occasion:**
 - Church at Rome had strife between Jewish and Gentile believers.
 - Some Jewish believers were holding on to familiar beliefs derived from the Law, they were not fully grasping the New Covenant freedom from the Law.
- **Points of Dispute**
 - Meat: refusal to eat meat if they cannot confirm it is kosher.
 - Wine: refusal to drink wine if they cannot be certain it was not dedicated to a false god/idol (cf. Daniel, in Dan. 1).
 - Days: insistence on keeping feast days, fast days, and likely the weekly Sabbath.
- **Groups**
 - Weak – those whose consciences don't let them eat and drink indiscriminately, or disregard holy days.
 - Strong – those who do partake and treat all days the same.
 - Both are strong or weak 'in faith'

"lack of insight into some of the implications of their faith in Christ." – Moo

REB: *"one person may have faith strong enough to eat all kinds of food."*

- **Paul's aim**
 - While he apparently sides with the strong, his aim is to preach unity and not to correct those who are weak.
 - He points out that both groups are treating the other in a non-Christian way.
- **Connection with the rest of Romans**
 - This Jew-Gentile division has been addressed throughout Romans.
 - Here Paul is harshest with the strong – the Gentile group, and we see again his call for them to not boast over against the Jews (what we saw in Rom. 11:17).
- **Relevance**

- While the specific issues that tripped up the Roman church are not common today, there is much that can be applied to our own day.
- In our zeal to be correct doctrinally, and to have the right practice, we tend to downplay the very real call for unity, that this passage teaches.
- Being “right” is not more important than loving other believers.

1. Do Not Condemn One Another – 14:1-12

a) Exhortation to Unity (14:1-3)

- All are to receive the other.
- Strong in Faith – should not despise the weak in Faith.
- Weak in Faith should not judge/condemn the Strong.
- Reason: God has received the other.

b) Theological Foundation of Unity (14:4-9)

- (1) Both groups serve Christ - the final Judge in the matter. (14:4)
- (2) Christian Practice is determined in one’s conscience and focused on the Lord (14:5-6)
- (3) Christian Practice is part of all aspects of our life which is all lived to the Lord – just as our death is to the Lord. (14:7-9)

c) Further exhortation to Unity (14:10-12)

- Now Paul returns to the theme of 14:1-3 – and repeats his call to stop judging or despising one another.
- Reason given here: we will all stand before the Judgement seat of God – and give account of ourself to God.
- God’s judgment is what we all are destined to receive – with Him as our master, we do not need to be judging one another.
- Our lack of unity, and disdain will itself be judged by our God.

2. Do Not Cause Your Brother to Stumble – 14:13-23

d) Exhortation to the Strong in Faith: Do Not Cause the Weak to Stumble (14:13-16)

- “Pass judgment” ... “decide” – are translations of the same Greek word (*krino*) and form a play on words.
- “Stumbling block” = usually refers to a “spiritual downfall” and is synonymous with “cause of offense” here
- Paul clarifies his view of the questionable matter. He is convinced (has strong faith that) no foods are unclean.

- This belief is “in the Lord Jesus” – it is Jesus’ teaching which led Paul to this position: see Mark 7:1-19, which Mark sums up as “Thus he [Jesus] declared all foods clean.” (Mk. 7:19b)
 - But the role of one’s conscience can make food unclean – if one cannot be “strong in faith” about the matter, then one must be bound by their conscience and abstain.
 - Love should govern our behavior with our brothers and sisters. (v. 15)
 - The strong can bring spiritual harm to the weak. In some sense they can even “destroy” them.
 - “what you regard as good” – is likely the Strong’s viewpoint on these matters
- ### e) Theological Rationale for the Exhortation: The Kingdom of God is More than Food and Drink (14:17-18)
- The reason Paul can be so pointed on his call to accept and to not see these matters of dispute as reasons to judge or despise others, is his understanding of their relative importance.
 - They are trivial compared to what God’s Kingdom is all about.

These matters are “‘doubtful things’ or ‘gray areas,’ things that are not bedrock issues of the Christian faith but rather are matters of Christian liberty.” ~ C. Marvin Pate

- **Righteousness** – “right behavior within the community of believers”.
- **Peace** – lack of strife/dissension and a harmony and support of one another.
- **Joy** – is the result of a community where each accepts the other and withholds judgment.

“...the kingdom of God is about joy. It does not consist of a company of sourpusses. We should be happy people... Why should we be glum and fuss over who eats meat and drinks wine?” ~ R.C. Sproul

- **Holy Spirit** – it is only through the Holy Spirit and His work in the Church that brings this (see also Rom. 15:5-6, 13).

Application:

“[Legalism] binds the freedom grace gives. Legalism makes minor matters the test of true spirituality. We have all encountered Christians who say the essence of spirituality is to refrain from dancing and lipstick and going to