

Romans – Justified through faith

Week 22 – Romans 14:1 – 15:13 (The will of God for changed relationships)

1. Our relationship to the weak: welcoming and not despising, judging or offending them

The weakness Paul refers to here is not weakness in character or will but 'in faith', a weakness in assurance that one's faith permits one to do certain things. The most likely identity of the weak mentioned is that they are largely Jewish Christians who were uncomfortable disregarding the regulations regarding food and ceremonial days that they had grown up with. Paul does not insist that everyone agrees with him over such disputable matters but that each should act according to his conscience and not pass judgement on someone else.

"In essentials unity;
In non-essentials liberty;
In all things charity."

- Rupert Meldenius

2. The positive principle (v1)

Paul starts by stating a positive principle we need to grasp and it is in two parts; the first part, the acceptance, is much more than 'tolerance' it implies a warm welcoming into fellowship in love. The second part, without passing judgement, means without debates, quarrels or judgement. The church is not to become a debating chamber.

3. The negative consequences (14:2 – 15:13)

Paul now lists the 'don'ts' etc.

- i. As the only way to avoid non-kosher meat was to eat no meat at all Paul prohibits those who feel able to eat meat from despising those who don't and from those who won't eat meat from condemning those who do. God accepts us either way. (14:2 – 14:4)
- ii. Paul wants us to examine our beliefs and not just blindly follow tradition or fashion, but to do everything we do mindful of Jesus and as part of a lifestyle of worship. (14:5 – 14:8)
- iii. Paul reminds we are all brothers and shouldn't judge each other. God will judge us. See Matthew 7:1 for Jesus' comments on this. (14:9 – 14:13)
- iv. Paul commands us to act in love and don't do things that we know will upset or offend the consciences of others. (14:13 – 14:19)
- v. Have some perspective – the kingdom of God is more important than such matters. (14:17 & 14:20)
- vi. Do not please yourselves, because Christ didn't, but look out for our neighbour's best interest. (15:1 – 15:3)
- vii. We need a spirit of unity so we can glorify God together. (15:5 & 15:6)

Q1. What matters would you consider 'disputable' and which not?

Q2. On what matters do we find it easy to judge other Christians and how can change to as to encourage a spirit of unity?

Memory Verse:

"For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit"

– Romans 14:17