

PARSON TO PERSON

SUNDAY'S WRITTEN MESSAGE

ROMANS 14 PART 10 – ROMANS 15 PART 2

“Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother’s way. I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died. Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men. Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense. It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak. Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.”

“We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification. For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, ‘The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me.’ For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and

one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God. Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy...” (Romans 14:13–15:9a).

Many new believers come to Christ with religious baggage; others come with no baggage at all. The atheist, humanist, secularist, pagan, et al. often come with little or no knowledge of the Christian faith and must be taught the standards of biblically mandated behavior. Their development is best applied by or through the law of love for God and for fellow men and women. For these individuals, growth in the faith requires little un-learning. The religious who come to Christ with the baggage of past teaching or “discipleship” need both un-learning and re-learning in order to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord. For these, the process is challenging. This fact is revealed throughout the Scriptures—in particular with the Jews, but also for the Gentile pagans.

Here in chapter 14 and 15 we learn that the Jews who were growing out of the Old Covenant required patience as they matured into the now newly inaugurated New Covenant. Putting away the Old Covenant’s required dietary, ceremonial, and even civil laws would challenge and trouble the Jews. At the other end of the spectrum were the Gentiles. They would also require the patience of others as they disconnected from their earlier formed worldviews and moved into the standards of the faith communicated in the epistles of the New Testament.

Paul gives incredible insight into the way believers should treat one another as he or she is maturing in the Lord: without condemnation or judgment. This would apply to those weak in faith as well as among those who were further advanced in grace. For example, Paul shows both the pagan and Jew that eating food offered to an idol (demon) is not a problem for the believer (for it is not what goes into a man that defiles the man—it is that which comes out of a man that defiles him. See Mark 7:14–15), but

if eating the “meal” in celebration or commemoration of an idol is involved, one must not partake. Why? It may encourage the pagan practice and endorse the false religious practices of the unredeemed (see 1 Corinthians 8 and 10:14–33). In like manner, one should be sensitive about how their liberty affects others. The same rule may apply to the legalistic. For example, if one believes he or she may eat shellfish, pork or drink wine, he or she must be careful not to be a source of discouragement to those who feel it’s wrong. The maturing believer is not to condemn nor judge the one who is “weak in the faith” (vs. 1). Moreover, those who are struggling with the liberties provided in grace are not to judge or condemn those who are free to enjoy those things permitted now in the Church Age.

Paul pointed out one way in which a mature believer might go about protecting others who may be stumbled by their liberty. He said, *“Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.”* For, if one should stumble a brother or sister, they err and fail to show the patience and love required—even when doing what is perfectly condoned in Scripture. On the other hand, Jesus was quite stern with the legalist who abusively made effort to bring others into bondage. For this reason, He rebuked the Pharisees, Scribes, Lawyers, et al. Therefore, both the weak and mature are called upon to love and show grace to one another.

Jesus was and is the premier in all things—in this case as the example of others-centered service. May we all learn from His great example and see that we can be a blessing to one another as we walk in love.

I love you all,
Pastor Paul