

Victorious – Make Every Effort

11/16/25

Romans 14:18-23

Sunday AM

The owner of a company made a surprise visit to one of stores. As he was walking thru the warehouse, he noticed a man lazily leaning up against some packing crates w/ his hands in his pockets doing nothing. Frustrated, the boss walked up to him and asked, “Sir, how much are you paid a week?” Undisturbed, the man said, “\$1,000.” Agitated, the boss peeled off (10) \$100 bills and said, “Here’s a week’s pay, get out of here and don’t ever come back!” So, the man took the money and left. Watching this unfold, the store manager was flabbergasted – until the boss turned to him and asked, “How long has that lazy guy been working for us?” The manager replied, “He’s never worked for us – he was just delivering a package.”

Can you say **jump to conclusion**? We have famous sayings for this – *look before you leap* | *never judge a book by its cover* | *assumption is the mother of all mess ups*. Well... as we arrive at **Romans 14:19-23**, Paul is going to speak to this issue in a believer’s life.

Let us make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. Don’t destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it’s wrong for a person to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. It’s better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall. So, whatever you believe about these things keep b/w yourself and God. Blessed is the one who doesn’t condemn himself by what he approves. But whoever has doubts is condemned if they eat, b/c their eating is not from faith; and everything that doesn’t come from faith is sin. Romans 14:19-23

Some of the greatest challenges we face in our faith is learning to navigate the “gray” areas where either the Bible doesn’t address a cultural issue directly, or the Bible leaves a little wiggle room for interpretation.

The great tug-of-war we deal w/ in the church is that we have some people who are so heavenly-minded they can be no earthly good (**legalist**) – while we have some people who are so earthly-minded they can be no heavenly good (**liberal**) – and then there are the rest of us caught in the crossfire of the religious opinions.

Well... in **Romans 14:19-23**, Paul is going to make a valiant attempt to straighten us all out.

I Pursue a Healthy, Helpful **CONNECTION**

Let us make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.

Have you ever considered the aim of the Christian life? Whether at *home*, at *church*, at *work*, or at *play*? Paul is clear. Christians are to be brokers of God’s peace who build others up for their good and God’s glory.

peace (eirēnē) refers to having a comforting trust that occurs when God knits His people together so tightly that nothing can pull them apart. It’s not the calm after a storm, but a unity that refuses to allow the storm win.

edify – to build up or construct. The picture is of a person meticulously building a house brick by brick.

When Paul says – *pursue what makes for peace and the edification of one another* – he’s reminding us that every interaction w/ a brother or sister is either helping to build them up or quietly tearing them down.

A small church was remodeling their sanctuary, and an older member, Mr. Jenkins, who was a lifelong brick mason, volunteered to build a short decorative wall behind the stage. Every day he came w/ his tools, working carefully. One day, a young guy stopped by to help and asked Mr. Jenkins why he was so picky. After all, it’s just a little wall. Mr. Jenkins said, “Son, that’s what people say until the wall starts to crack.” Pointing to the wall, he

added, “Each brick leans on the next ones. If I’m off a little here, by the time I’m done, the whole wall would be crooked. My job is to make sure every brick fit so the wall holds together.”

Paul’s point here in Romans 14 is that when God calls us to peace and edification, it’s not just that no one is fighting, but that everyone is joined/fitted together – working together for His kingdom. That’s peace!

In our church, every discussion, every decision about the gray areas, every time we lay down a preference is like setting another brick. Thus, sharp words, harsh judgments, or digging in on tertiary issues might feel like a single brick, but over time, these preferences can build a crooked wall that cracks under pressure.

When Paul says – *make every effort to do what leads to peace and edification* – he’s calling us to be **good masons** – ¹to check our attitude against the level of the gospel – ²to set our words in the mortar of love – and ³to make sure what we’re doing helps others to fit more securely into the body, and not loosen their place in it.

II Be CONSIDERATE of Others

Don’t destroy the work of God for the sake of food.

This is a bit of an odd statement unless you realize the context. In Roman days, the people would go to their local pagan temple and offer a food sacrifice to their gods – and then go home, cook the meat and eat it.

When these new believers converted, they didn’t know what to do regarding eating meat dedicated to idols – and this was becoming an issue among the church. Some said – NO! you can’t eat it, while others thought you could – and this was becoming a test of fellowship among the church and ripping the church apart. The church, and relationships w/in the church, were being damaged and they were causing each other to stumble.

BTW – Paul dealt w/ the same issue in Corinth. You can read about it in 1 Corinthians 8. In that passage, Paul concluded (4) things he shared w/ them.

- The meat is fine to eat b/c God made the animal and the idols they were dedicated to don’t actually exist b/c there is actually only (1) God.
- Nonetheless, check your conscience and if your spidy-senses go off – then don’t do it, b/c that’s the H.S. moving in your conscience to protect you.
- Don’t bind other people’s consciences by your own – what may be sin for you doesn’t mean it is for them.
- Don’t look down on others who do something you can’t do nor decide you can do it b/c others can.

I recently came across a good test for when we encounter the **gray** areas – called the 3 R’s:

RECEIVE – these are things you can participate in so long as it doesn’t violate your conscience or witness – so long as they are done in good taste w/ right motives.

REJECT – these are things believers should explicitly reject b/c they’re evil and the Bible is clear on them.

REDEEM – these are things the Bible doesn’t directly speak against yet can be redeemed for good/G.C. I think Christian holidays – that were once pagan.

When we major on the minors it more often than not damages our relationships w/ others and the church. *We must remember that being right about the issue doesn’t justify being wrong w/ people.*

Our love for our brothers/sisters must always triumph our personal liberty. Never trade someone's spiritual good for your temporary pleasure. We might need to say – ***I could, but I won't – for your sake.***

A cul-de-sac was planning a big 4th of July cookout w/ fireworks. For the event, one neighbor bought an arsenal of fireworks. A few days before the 4th, a new neighbor moved in who had just returned from his 3rd deployment. While they were chatting one day, the man learned that his new neighbor was suffering w/ PTSD and loud explosions caused him great distress. The fireworks guy had a choice. While he'd done nothing wrong, fireworks were legal, and everyone wanted a show – he decided to return the fireworks. When people asked why there were no fireworks from his yard, he said, ***"My freedom to blow things up isn't as important as our neighbor's peace."***

III **CULTIVATE** a Clear Conscience

whatever you believe about these things keep b/w yourself and God... But whoever has doubts is condemned if they eat... and everything that doesn't come from faith is sin.

Paul was saying – live your convictions before an audience of One (God) and not the applause/approval of people. ¹*Don't flaunt your freedom,* ²*don't violate your conscience,* and ³*don't do anything you can't do in faith* – b/c whatever isn't from faith is sin. Instead, live in a way that it pleases God and encourages others.

We've been talking about this idea for weeks that we first have a responsibility to walk intimately w/ the Lord personally, but we also have a duty to help each other to walk w/ the Lord. But make no mistake, it all begins w/ your walk w/ God.

In light of the context here, I think of Jesus' words in the SOTM when He said that before you become concerned about the speck in your brother's eye, take care of the plank in your own eye.

What does this mean practically? It means that I must recognize that there are some convictions God has only given to me and I can't pressure others to adopt them or copy my liberty. So, instead of saying – "why don't you...?" I have to learn to say – "You follow what the Lord is telling you to do."

At the same time, I can't wash my hands of my brother and say *good luck and God bless...* I also have to be of encouragement to them to challenge them, assist them when needed, and do what I can to continually point them in the right direction b/c the issue isn't just *what* we do, but *how* and *why* we do it.

I was talking w/ one of our pilots and he said, "People think flying the plane is the hard part. It's not. The hard part is working thru the checklist when you're tired and nobody's watching." He said that before every flight, he walks around the plane, checks the tires, looks at the engines, tests the controls. Then, inside the cockpit, he and the co-pilot read every line of the checklist out loud. It's tedious, and the passengers never see it. Yet, if they're late, people get irritated – "Let's go!" Then he said, "But that quiet checklist is what keeps everyone alive. The day I start rushing it to keep people happy is the day I shouldn't be flying."

I think this is what Paul is talking about w/ conscience. Most of what keeps our walk w/ God healthy happens in places nobody sees – *what we watch, what we do, what we approve* that's b/w ourselves and God. So, cultivating a clear conscience is doing the checklist w/ the Lord, even if nobody else understands, b/c their opinion won't be sitting on the throne when we stand before Him.

WTM – let me give you (4) actions of application that you can take home w/ you and put into action today.

1 Do a Brick check on Your Relationships

Think thru your week – *home, work, church*. Where have your words or attitudes been building someone up – and where have they been quietly chipping away at them? Confess and correct the cracks.

2 Run the 3 R's on the Gray Areas in Your Life

Take the questionable activities in your life and ask: Should I RECEIVE this, REJECT this, or REDEEM this? Adjust your practice to match your conviction.

3 Have an "Audience of One" Moment with God

Get alone w/ the Lord and ask: "Is there anything I'm approving that I can't really do in faith?" Whatever He puts His finger on, surrender it.

4 Replace Criticism w/ Encouragement

This week, when you're tempted to critique another believer over a gray area, stop and pray, "Lord, how can I build them up instead?" Then speak one clear word to strength their walk w/ Christ.