

Intro: I remember hearing one time "If you find a perfect church, don't join it you'll mess it up!".

As offensive as that may sound, I understood it. What the person was trying to say was that there isn't a perfect church. The church is made up of imperfect people, so therefore you won't find one that is perfect – sinless.

At the time of this letter, Paul is writing the church in Rome, not only to introduce them to the gospel message but obviously they have already placed their trust in Christ, so in a now practical manner Paul is educating the believers in Rome on how to live as Christians. How to serve one another in the body with our gifts. How to be examples in society – submit to governing authorities, pay taxes, no longer live in the blatant sinful manner in which they once lived. "Walking properly and making no provision for the flesh".

In Ch 14 Paul is digging deeper and getting a little more personal toward a specific issue they are facing in that particular body there in Rome. Disunity.

- The church there in Rome were beginning to show the early signs of disunity.
- Which is always a designed attack from Satan
- In order to make the church ineffective, it must first be divided.
- Jesus said "If a kingdom or house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand"

But this problem wasn't just limited to the church in Rome. Matter of fact it seems every local church mentioned in the N.T. had divisions to deal with for one reason or another.

- Cor – over human leaders. Even suing each other.
- Gal – biting and devouring each other Gal 5:15
- In Eph 4:1-3; Col 2:1-2 you see a reminder of the importance of Christian unity

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- Phillipi – two women were at odds with each other and as a result, splitting the church. (Phil 4:1-3)

My point is, that every local church made up of a diversity of believers will have to contend with disunity.

***** No wonder the Psalmist wrote Ps 133:1 **Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity!** NKJV

So how do you deal with disunity? How do we minister to one another with in the body with so much diversity and opinion on matters that seem to be “gray areas” in scripture? Not matters of sin but of culture and background convictions.

- (Early church growth. Add Gentiles)
- (Church Counsel in Jerusalem to bring freedom) Acts 15
 - “For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, things strangled and sexual immorality”

You can imagine the excitement for the new believers through out the churches get the news that they are allowed to serve the Lord Jesus without these restrictions or convictions of others, laid on them.

But this became a continued problem that would need to be addressed from time to time as Paul wrote these churches. The argument over Liberty. What believers were free and not free to do. Convictions on the part of some that were very narrow and convictions on the part of others that were very broad. And so they began pointing fingers at one another and if these things aren’t dealt with in a biblical way they can become problems.

- You will get disensions, divisions, small groups pitted against other small groups until the house is divided and cannot stand.

In the church in Rome Paul is addressing two issues that began to arise there as he deals with Liberty. 1) Dietary. 2) Days that one observes.

To us this may seem small & insignificant kinda petty but to them it was a serious matter. But the way Paul deals with it, we will find very helpful to us as we deal with dissensions or disunity over Liberties.

What's interesting is Paul addresses the more mature brother. (usually how things go).

What's also interesting is who he calls mature and who he calls the weaker brother. The one he calls the weaker brother is the one that is more narrow in his convictions. The ones who only ate vegetables.

How do we avoid dividing over doubtful things? There needs to be open reception.

1-13 I. LESSONS IN LIBERTY

1-2 A. Receive The Weaker Brother

1 Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. 2 For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables.

- 1a** **1.** Paul says look "**Receive them**". Don't openly rebuke and reject the weaker brother. Understand they're growing. Have a receptive heart.
- a.** Be a bigger brother
 - b.** By saying that I'm saying there may be someone judging you (not over sin) but you Prove to be a little stronger in the faith by being receptive.
 - c.** By being open to continue to love.
 - d.** Receive = *proslambano* – present imperative meaning to "keep on" To take as one's companion, to receive into one's home. But not to generate disputes.

2. When he says "Receive the weaker brother" notice how he says "**weak in the faith**"

a. So what he's saying is that this brother isn't necessarily weak. He just may be weak in the area of faith that deals with his liberties.

i. Doesn't understand how much freedom he has in Christ.

1 3. **"Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things" NLT "Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions"**

a. "Come here man, let me take you in so I can make an example of you!"

2 4. **"For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables".**

a. Again notice now Paul is saying that the weaker brother is the one with the legalistic attitude.

i. The one that thought they were the actual stronger one.

b. When we get to the point where we will, judge or despise, and Paul will get there in a minute, people who haven't reached the spiritual maturity we have, we actually reveal ourselves the weaker.

c. When we find ourselves putting more rules to seem more spiritual, we've become the weaker.

i. Because we've stopped operating in love.

ii. And started operating in pride.

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- iii. And we stop depending on the freedom Christ died to give us and started depending on our own so-called rules and regs to look spiritually mature.

Back then in that church it was some who were saying "You've come to the Lord eating pork chops & chicharones, but you should've grown already. You should've weaned yourself off of the meat to a more spiritual diet. Vegetables. Some would say " I can't believe your eating meat, do you even know what that came from? And others would be saying I can't believe your eating salad do you know what the dogs do in that field your eating from?"

Either way they were judging one another and look what Paul says about that.....vs 3-4

3-4 B. Not Your Servant To Judge

3 Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. 4 Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

- 3-4**
- 1.** Don't be running around despising & judging one another it's unhealthy no matter what you eat or don't eat.
 - a.** Vegetarianism wasn't the problem nor was it eating meat, it was the despising of each other that was the problem.
 - 2.** So in areas where scripture does not give us a precise definite teaching, there is supposed to be latitude. In other words in matter of personal convictions they are to be that personal.

a. I have no problem with people who have a more narrow view than I do. Just don't put your trip on me. But people with more broader freedoms, I have a problem with.

3. **"who are you to judge another servant....?"** Think about that. If someone were to go to your house and judge your servant?

4 **"To his own Master he stands or falls. Indeed he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand"** This is such an encouraging verse. Because if you are the judge, with so much heaviness and worry as to the standing or falling of another brother Weighing on your shoulders.... ...keeping you up at night. You can rest free. Because God's his master not you, and you can't make him stand but God can!

a. **"God is able to make him stand"** And if you've been in the Lord long enough you'll come to realize that you can never really call it.

Next Paul goes into those who esteem one day over another as he shows us both of these matters are a matter of conscience.

5-6 C. It's A Matter Of Conscience

One person thinks one day is very important and should be observed, the other says, "I think they're all important." Paul says **"Let each of us be fully convinced in our own mind"**

1. There was some in the church who were obviously of Jewish background and to them they were used to celebrating and observing the Feasts, new moons, Sabbaths as they had always. But again there were others who were Gentile believers who felt "well whatever your celebrating is worthy of celebrating everyday"

a. The key here is that **"each be fully convinced in his own mind"**

b. Whatever your observing whether you do or don't should be done as unto the Lord. Understanding that the substance is of Him!

Col 2:16-17 So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, 17 which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

c. These things are shadows. No one hugs a shadow.

d. Grab hold of Christ. When celebrating Christmas, Easter , Thanksgiving, (Martin Luther King)

e. That you do it unto the Lord! Read vs 6

f. (have some issues today about Sat or Sun)

2. Just be convinced in your own mind. As to give God thanks and glorify Him.

Why? Cause Paul goes on to say (read 7-9)

7-9 D. We All Live And Die To The Lord

8xs in these verses (5-9) we see the word "Lord" written. To the Lord, unto to Lord, we are the Lord's, that he would be the Lord. 8xs. Is Paul trying to make a point?

1. **"None of us lives to himself"** we're God's. And He's the Lord. We're not the Lord! No Christian has the right to play God in another Christians life. We can pray, advise, admonish but we cannot take the place of God. Nor the Holy Spirit.

a. **Warren Weirsbe** *"The church is divided and weakened because Christians will not allow Jesus Christ to be Lord"*

b. Example from Peters restoration "what about him!" **Jn 21:15-25**

2. **"none of us lives to himself"** We're not even our own!

a. Paul says "us". A reminder to all of us as Christians – together have been crucified with Christ. Gal 2:20 *I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

8 3. **8 For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.**

9 4. **9 For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living.** This is the reason Christ came, died and rose again. That "He" would be the Lord.

10-12 E. **Why Judge When We'll Stand In Judgement**

10a 1. Why do we judge or show contempt?

10b 2. **"For we shall all stand before the judgement seat of Christ"**

a. **"The judgement seat of Christ"** in Greek is the Bema seat. Where Christians will be judged for their works. Not their sins. Jesus already paid that price.

b. But the Bema seat was where during the Greek games the judge would sit and at the end give out the rewards.

c. Paul mentions more about this in **1 Cor 3:10-15. Go to .**

12 3. **"So then each of us shall give account of himself before God"**
We need to be concerned and focused on our walk before the Lord.

a. We have enough to give account for.

b. **1 John 2:28-29** *And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.*

13 F. In Summary

13 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.