

THE TROUBLE WITH FREEDOM

Romans 14:13b-21

In 2020 B.P. (Before Pandemic)

we were concluding final chapters
of study in Romans.

Though timing was wrong for these messages, they're important
for God's people to understand.

So we want to go back & finish that study.

Theme of Rom:

"The just shall live by faith"

–the gospel,

good news from God to man.

Power of God which produces salvation.

Rom: from creation to present, ***the only way anyone has ever
come to God is by faith.***

Paul began by showing

necessity of salvation by faith.

Religious or pagan,

ALL sin => ALL deserve to die.

While we were in that condition,

God showed His love for us by sending His Son to die.

When we *trust Christ* & His finished work, God *declares* us
righteous.

That's ***the Gospel.***

Application of Gospel 12-15:13

12:1 *"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to
offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God–this
is your spiritual act of worship."*

"Therefore" ties the doctrine
to practical implications."

Since God's done so *much* for us—people who don't deserve it!
—*we should respond appropriately.*

How should we respond to God's love?

We don't serve to earn God's favor; we've already received favor;
that motivates us
to serve Him in gratitude.

1st We respond to God's love by presenting our life as a sacrifice to God 12:1

2nd We respond by daily surren-der to His will

2 "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test & approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing & perfect will."

Nothing short of total commitment to God makes sense!

Based on those 2 principles as a starting point, Paul then considers how we should relate the gospel to other areas of our life.

In ch. 14, he comes to matters about which sincere, godly people hold different opinions => "*doubtful things*"

We introduced this topic in 14:1-13a, before the pandemic interrupted us.

At that time, we considered other matters more critical to consider under these circumstances.

Let's review what we saw in March.

How do we decide what we should do when God's people don't agree about what we should do in a specific issue?

Basic rule: Study God's Word;

see what *God* says

Do what God says!

Don't do what He says not to!

Some things Bible doesn't specifically mention.

What do we do about such things?

How do we decide?

Seek principles that give idea of what God expects.

Determine what God wants YOU to do;

allow others to do same &

to make different choices!

When Bible doesn't give us a standard, we have liberty to **do what seems best, *submitting choices to H.S.***

Rom 14-15: Our responsibility:

1st Principle: Don't judge others! 14:1-13a

God has right to judge

–hasn't delegated authority to *US!*

If we're free to do something,

don't look down on people who aren't!

If we aren't free to do something,

don't condemn people who enjoy freedom!

We should be convinced in *our* mind that **we're** pleasing God!
We've no right to condemn or belittle others for their choices!
GOD can handle His servants,
when we need instruction!

Top priority in our day:

"MY freedom!" "MY rights!"

Principle of NT teaching:

Christ made us *FREE!*

"WE'RE FREE!"

–But how *far* does our liberty go?

Biblical teaching re. "*doubtful things*" is hard!

We're better at *judging*

than *doing* what God wants us to do!

TROUBLE WITH FREEDOM

Liberty is a wonderful gift from God!

Problem comes when we get a *self-centered* view of liberty

"I have my rights!"

"Nobody can tell ME what to do!" =>

2nd Principle: 14:13b-21

Avoid anything which might hurt others!

More resistance to this principle than any principle in Scripture!

We'd rather please ourselves, than give up rights for others!

3 SPECIFIC EXHORTATIONS:

(hard to put into practice!)

1) Walk according to love 13b-16 "*Let us stop passing judgment on 1 another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any*

stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way. ¹⁴As 1 who's in the Lord Jesus, I'm fully convinced that no food's unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it's unclean. ¹⁵If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you're no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died. ¹⁶Do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil."

NOT our job to judge others;

Our job: careful how WE live

Determine **not to put a roadblock or cause to fall**, in anyone else's way. 13b

2 problems may arise when you go on hike:

-rock you trip over [Guate. sidewalks]

-trap you get stuck in,
or hurt your foot in.

Avoid conduct that might cause another to trip & fall, or cause them to get stuck or hurt

Re: doubtful things,

issue is NOT standard God gave

Doing or *NOT doing* them, makes no difference to God!

Paul affirms:

"nothing is unclean in itself."

Food & drink they're debating are good; **God made them!**

But not everyone sees it that way

When we see something as wrong, it's wrong *for us*,

If we participate, our perception makes it wrong *for us!*

1 Cor 8: We all have some knowledge.

BUT *knowledge alone just puffs us up.*

Love's worth more,

because it *builds up OTHERS.* =>

Love's more important than enjoying liberty!

If I insist on *using* my rights,

though it won't hurt *ME*,

I may harm another

& thus *not walk according to love.*

It's better to give up our rights

It's better to walk in love

Don't let our rights trip another;

ruin *their* walk with God"

Love's worth more than food,

or any activity we claim as our right

15b "*Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died.*"

"Destroy" doesn't = lose salvation

=> "*go sour,*" "*turn bad.*"

Our rights may ruin what God's doing in their life!

When we walk that way,

we aren't walking in love.

Don't let insistence on doing *anything* discredit what we value as good. 16

"What's good" could refer to our activity, or to our liberty

To insist on our rights discredits something good.

Are we willing to give up “good” for sake of others!

Better, walk so God’s glorified by seeking other’s good

2nd exhortation derived from principle of not hurting others.

#1 = Walk according to love

#2 = Pursue peace

& building up one another

17-19 *“For the kingdom of God isn’t a matter of eating & drinking, but of right-eousness, peace & joy in H.S. ¹⁸because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God & approved by men.*

¹⁹Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace & to mutual edification”

Some things are worth fighting for;

food & drink aren't among them.

Goal worth committing our life to:

pursuing God’s kingdom! Mt. 6:33

“Seek 1st the kingdom of God & his righteousness.”

When we pursue that, such issues are insignificant. Neither food, nor drink, nothing’s that important!

3 essential elements make up the kingdom:

It’s NOT about food & drink!

It’s about: righteousness, peace & joy.

All 3 produced by HS;

deal with relationships with others

These produce more fruit than struggle for my rights!

People who seek to please God that way, not only please God, but are approved by others also!

**1st priority: What's best for one another -NOT
defending our rights. 19**

3rd specific exhortation:

#3 = Don't destroy God's work 20-21 20 *"Don't destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food's clean, but it's wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble.*

Food they want is good;

it's ALL good; God made it!

Isn't good: fight over such issues at expense of another.

Don't harm God's work in them, so we enjoy *our* rights

Universal affirmation:

His commitment–

21 *"It's better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do **anything** that will cause your brother to fall."*

If eating meat offends others, don't eat it!

If drinking wine offends others, don't drink it!

If any activity causes others to trip & fall, don't do it!

Nothing's that important!!

**None of our rights is important enough to risk hurting
other people**

Do what builds up others, rather than fight for our rights.

Worthwhile vow:

We won't do anything

which causes others to trip & fall!

For years I've presented this– There's *always* protest:

"We can't submit our lives to likes & dislikes of everybody."

That *IS* what God says!

Is His Word our ***final*** authority?

Costa Rica experience: Wizard of Oz

–stupid issue! How important was it for sake of a brother or sister?

How much do we love one another?

Christ loved us enough

to give His life for us!

Do we love each other enough

to give up our rights?