

ACCEPT

Romans 14

In the church, look for things which unite rather than divide.

For the past several months, we have heard this phrase: "We are all in this together." And for a time, perhaps that statement rang true in many cases. But we are still divided, some say more than ever. Think about things that cause us to divide.

- "The virus", social distancing
- Businesses shut down vs those trying to "open"
- Criticism of national, state and local governments, trying to deal with "the virus".

But in the church, we are truly "in this together". Really? Here is also a short list of things which can cause us to divide.

- Dress and demeanor in church
- Worship music
- Chairs vs pews
- Church budget
- Mission support: local vs worldwide
- Hymnals vs "words on the wall"

Sound familiar?

- How about a short list of things which should cause us to unite:
- Expository bible preaching
- Gospel singing
- Loving Christian fellowship
- Victory over sin and death., just to mention a few.

Today's study will center around some practical advice given by the Apostle Paul to the church at Rome, in which he encouraged believers to not quibble about trivial things which could divide, and concentrate on important issues which should unite. It's also interesting that Paul wrote this letter to the church at Rome before actually visiting. So he learned about many of their struggles through

communicating with friends living in Rome, such as Priscilla and Aquila.

Accept rather than judge
“Lawful” things may not edify
Pursue what will build up

Accept rather than judge Romans 14: 1-4

vs 1. Paul here encourages the church to accept and mentor those new Christians who are weaker in their walk. He also discourages endless debates over theological questions for which there really is a difference of opinion. This verse is not giving liberty to clear cut sinful practices. see Romans 6: 1-2.

vs 2-3. What’s all this talk about eating vs not eating? Two possibilities:

The Roman church had both Jewish and Gentile converts. For the Jews, the question of “clean” vs “unclean” meat. But recall God had addressed this issue with Peter. see Acts 10: 9-15. For the Gentiles, the question of meat previously offered in idol sacrifices, later sold in the marketplace. Paul had addressed this issue in 1 Corinthians 8: 4-8.

But at the same time, Paul advised believers to be sensitive to these potential stumbling blocks. see 1 Corinthians 8: 9-13.

vs 4. The term “household servant” refers to a slave, and slavery was very prominent during the time of Paul. The Apostles in several books in the New Testament didn’t praise slavery, but also implored both the servant and the master to show Christlike behavior toward each other.

“Lawful” things may not edify Romans 14: 13-15.

vs 13-14. In these verses, Paul is using the various dietary issues as a potential stumbling block, which can cause division in the church. But, bringing these verses to 2020, we could substitute church attire, worship music style, “high” vs “low” church liturgy, etc.

vs 15. As we repeat this verse, it will be helpful to replace “what we eat” with one or more of the “2020 issues”. And remember that weaker believers (for whom Christ also died) can be hurt

through endless debate over trivial things which can divide rather than unite.

Pursue what will build up Romans 14: 16-19

vs 16-17. Paul encouraged the church to manifest a positive reputation both within the church and to the outside world.

In verse 17, he sums up the essence of Christian living: righteousness, peace and joy--all of these happen from the “inside--out”.

vs 18-19. Paul in these verses is sharing his vision for what the church should be--a body of fervent believers, intent on sharing the gospel with the world, loving and accepting each other in spite of physical, ethnic, economical differences. Let’s recall what the early church in Jerusalem looked like, just after Pentecost. see Acts 2: 42-47. Compare in your mind’s eye with FBC on May 31, 2020. Amen or ouch?

That’s about all for today--continue to stay safe and well.

Also, we are planning to have live Sunday morning Bible Study next Sunday, June 7, 9 am in our classroom. Hope to see you then.

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