

Romans 14

By: Charles Stanley

From: On the Epistle to the Romans

“Now, him that is weak in the faith receive not to (the) determining of questions of reasoning (New Translation).” We may make a mistake either way. We may become so narrow as to reject a brother weak in faith, or we may make our receiving a caviling person, the determining of doubtful questions, and reasoning speculations. The Holy Spirit would have us carefully avoid both these extremes. In many things such as eating and drinking, esteeming one day holy, or all days alike — in all such matters, we are not to judge one another, but walk together in love.

Verse 10: “But why dost thou judge thy brother? Or why dost thou set at naught thy brother? For we shall all stand [or be placed] before the judgment-seat of Christ.” This is not a question of being brought into the judgment for sins, or sin. That has been settled earlier in the Epistle (Rom. 8:1,33-34). The Lord assures us this shall not be (John 5:24). What then is meant here? Simply the question in hand. The fact that all will be placed before God, who cannot make a mistake in what He approves, should be a wholesome check in preventing the injurious habit of judging one another. “So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more.”

Surely this does not teach us to be indifferent when the Person of Christ, or the truth in Him, is attacked: for Paul had to withstand even a Peter to his face. But it does teach us “that no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way.” To do so, is not to walk according to love. A weak brother might, by seeing me eat things offered to idols, be led to do so, and his conscience being defiled, he might fall into idolatry, and get, for the time being, under the power of Satan, and, as to fellowship, away from Christ; in fact, just where a wicked person had to be put for the destruction of the flesh (1 Cor. 5:5). This would be destroying a brother, instead of the flesh, or,

on the other hand, his conscience might be destroyed. In any case love would seek to put no stumbling-block in a brother’s way.

We have also known cases where a person has observed the Lord’s Day as the Sabbath, in a pious but Jewish way. Another person to show his superior knowledge has done things on the Lord’s Day which were a desecration in the eyes of the former; and the result has been most disastrous to both. For years both conscience and communion were lost or destroyed.

Do not, however, for a moment suppose that these words “destroy not him,” can possibly mean the destruction of eternal life. Scripture cannot contradict itself. If it seems to do so, it is evident we have not got the true sense of one at least of the texts. If the eternal life we have in Christ could be destroyed, then it would not be eternal. And of those who have eternal life, Jesus says, “they shall never perish,” that is enough for faith. It is, however, a most wholesome and important thing to have the judgment-seat of Christ constantly before us. It would preserve us from much judging, or even devouring one another.

The great point here is serving Christ acceptably to God. “For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.” These are precious words: righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. If God reigns in our hearts, there will be consistency, that which is consistent with the holy place we are in. “Let us therefore follow after the things that make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.” This will lead us to do nothing, whether in eating flesh or drinking wine, whereby a brother may be stumbled. This must not, however, lead us to compromise the gospel.

Had Paul also refused to eat with the Gentiles lest he should offend Peter, that would not have been forefication, but would have compromised the gospel. It was saying Christ is not enough for your eternal salvation, you must also keep the law. Thus by some the law was

held as superior to Christ. In like manner, if a society of men were to say, Christ alone is not enough for the deliverance of a sinner and his complete salvation, you must take a pledge with us not to drink wine it would not be of faith, or love, or edification, thus to compromise the gospel. It would soon be, as with the Judaizing teachers, to seduce from Christ. If Christ has not the pre-eminence, something else soon will have. Satan ever seeks to use that which is good to displace Christ.

Law is good, temperance is good; but let us watch lest we use either to rob us of Christ. We need to be kept on the right hand, and on the left. These remarks are only intended to apply where temperance is put in the place of Christ. Let everyone be fully persuaded in his own mind, and let as each remember “whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” Let us ask ourselves in the

presence of God, do I need this for my body which is the Lord’s? Is there any brother I know, who will be stumbled if I take it? Have I faith, is it pleasing to the Lord that I take it, or that I do this?

And let us be very careful as to boasting in these matters, or in judging our brother. “Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself BEFORE GOD. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.”

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