

So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual up building. (Romans 14:19)

I. When Christians Disagree

- a. Paul's primary concern in Romans 14 is how Christians how are to express their new identity in Christ to one another in fellowship. (Read 1 Cor. 11:17-22)
- b. Unfortunately, disunity has always been a major problem with God's people?
 1. The Bible records family strife, civil wars, and almost every local church had divisions to contend with.
- c. There are key realities to our fellowship in Church life: **1)** we come to Christ from a divided world, thus we divide ourselves over a variety of concerns; **2)** if the Church is to thrive, as Christ has intended, she must have a continuous flow of new converts and "grounded" mature saints; **3)** weaknesses and strengths exist in both the babes and in the mature.
- d. Paul's exhortation is to the "mature saints" that they should "receive" (*proslambano*), means welcome (to actively draw another into your circle of friends) the weak in faith.

I. The Weak and the Strong

- a. The "weak" Christians were condemning "strong" Christians, which caused the "strong" Christians to despise the "weak" Christians. (John 7:24)
 1. The "weak" were Gentile Christians who abstained from meat (and perhaps wine) on certain "fast" days, under the influence of certain pagan religions.
 2. The "weak" were Christians (Jew and Gentile), who practiced strict personal lifestyles.
 3. The "weak" were Jewish Christians who believed that it was wrong to eat meat that was sold in a marketplace because it "could be" tainted by idolatry.
 4. The "weak" were Jewish Christians who refrained from certain foods out of loyalty to the Law.
- b. The "strong" Christians are those who understood their spiritual liberty in Christ and were not enslaved by diets or holy days.
- c. Condemning distorts relationships and keeps us from extending and receiving ministry from one another.
- d. There are areas of life where there are no clear distinctions between right or wrong, it simply comes down to preference. What is it that makes a plate of "food holy" or a "day holy?" (vv.5-9)
- e. The idea, "We will have to agree to disagree" is not a concept conceived in heaven.

II. Thoughts and Considerations for Action

- a. The bottom line: "I care if you stumble." The strong have an obligation to the weak.
- b. Your lifestyle must be able to withstand public and biblical scrutiny. We affect each other.
 1. One man drinks alcohol and another does not. Who is right?
 2. One woman wears her hair up and wears dresses only, her neighbor does not. Who is right?
 3. Do not despise weaker saints. ☺ Be ready to instruct and admonish them in love.
- c. Knowledge of what is right and appropriate must be balanced with love.
 1. Illustration – a mother love shows her love toward a child's who has fear of darkness.
 2. Illustration – a mother, father, a child and scissors.
 3. Make every effort for peace and mutual edification. (v.19) The strong and the weak must help each other grow.
- d. Whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. (v.22)