

Parson to Person

ROMANS 14 PART 9— ROMANS 15 PART 1

“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. I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died. Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men. Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense. It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak. Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.”

“We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification. For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, ‘The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me.’ For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God. Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy...” (Romans 14:13–15:9a).

It is apparent that Paul’s message in Romans 14 related primarily to how the new believers in Rome should live—amidst the changing covenantal systems. To many Jews this transition is/was particularly troubling. They had dietary laws to which they are/were committed, and Sabbath observations that religiously, traditionally, and practically serve/served them in multiple ways. However, they were no longer restricted as the result of the annulling of the Old Covenant and the now inaugurated New Covenant. Therefore, they were no longer forbidden to eat certain foods nor were they required to keep their worship specific to the Sabbath Day—Saturday. However, this transition, posing a problem for the Jews, was to be handled with sensitivity toward those who were trying to figure it all out, grow in grace, and live in freedom. Moreover, questions related to the consumption of wine (primarily among the Gentiles) was also forefront and required address.

This was not as much an issue with or for the Jews. They were already accustomed to drinking wine—inasmuch as they were warned against drunkenness throughout and prior to the Old Covenant era.

Paul’s point was a higher law than that of matters of conscience: wine, food, days of the week—or anything we may face today. It was the newly revisited theme of love for neighbor—especially among those who were struggling, stumbled, or, as I might suggest, offended. It was a call to others-centered living.

In these discussions one must rightly discern between those who are stumbled and those who are offended. The stumbled are those weak in faith who may return to or fall prey to the things that may negatively affect their welfare—spiritual, psychological, or physical. The offended are the self-

righteous or self-proclaimed fruit or behavior inspectors. Sometimes they need to be rebuked—as Jesus amply displayed.

In conclusion of this topic, I will suggest the following:

- 1) Jesus provided us the greatest example of self-sacrifice and others-centered living.
- 2) We are called to serve the Lord and His people—we are not here to serve ourselves. “Others.”
- 3) As we give of ourselves (for the sake of others as unto the Lord), much will be given unto us!
- 4) Wisdom demands we evaluate where we are on the grace curve and then recognize God’s grace at work in others—His people. “Patiently care for the brethren.”
- 5) Leadership demands we protect the body from “fruit and behavior inspectors.”

I love you all,

Pastor Paul