

THE BOOK OF ROMANS
"Christian Liberty"
Romans 14:13-23

INTRODUCTION

1. The importance of this chapter cannot be overestimated. For to have a building relationship within the church is of utmost desire.

2. The first twelve verses should be read and re-read. There is so much there to digest. Brethren are not to be careless to judge one another. Remember, growth or maturity levels differ among Christians. On the other hand, be careful to judge yourself because God will ultimately judge you.

3. Now, the Spirit of God explains the true use of Christian liberty. The main thrust of this section is toward the strong believer, albeit, the weak brother is not overlooked. Consider:-

1. EXHORTATION v. 13

a. Negative

The present imperative suggests "Let's not have the habit of criticising one another." Stick to Scripture when considering evil, not your opinions!

b. Positive

The aorist imperative means to determine your course of action once and for all. "Stumbling block" is a snare and hurts. One can recover. "Occasion to fall" is a deathtrap and kills. No recovery here.

2. AFFIRMATION v. 14

a. Given

The verbs know and persuade (perfect tense) are in living connection with Christ (in the Lord Jesus).

b. Explained

The one who esteems or accounts something unclean finds the item unclean. Otherwise nothing is unclean by nature. The phrase "to him it is unclean" uses the demonstrative pronoun "that one." It is due to a mistake in his own mind.

3. SUPPLICATION vv. 15, 16

a. About grieving v. 15a

Here is a concern about injuring one's brother over "food." To do so is to fail to walk around according to love. This is a major attitude to be demonstrated by the strong (cf. vv. 3, 10). To refrain from sin is a believer's duty; to refrain from something good for the sake of not injuring a brother is love.

b. About destroying v. 15b

The present imperative means to stop destroying. It relates to the deathtrap idea (v. 13). All by means of stupid food! The height of the crime is shown in that Christ died for the brother.

c. About blaspheming v. 16

The good is one's freedom in Christ, thus should not be blasphemed i.e. spoken about derisively.

4. POSITION vv. 17, 18

a. Negatively v. 17a

Stated pointedly the acts (not items) of eating and drinking are really not the kingdom of God (salvation). External activities are minimized.

b. Positively v. 17b

Real salvation is the state or position of righteousness (3:21) which results in peace (5:1) and joy (5:2, 3)--all produced by the Holy Spirit internally.

c. Practically v. 18

"These things" is singular, hence righteousness, peace, and joy are a single triad! They are not abstracts, but items which regulate behavior. As a slave a believer works as a slave (cf. vv. 6-9 about the Lordship of Christ). We must be directed and controlled by His bloody death. By so doing, the believer is acceptable for God and tested out and approved (so Greek) to be valuable for men.

5. OBLIGATION vv. 10, 20.

a. Following v. 19

The verb is pursue in the present imperative i.e. make it a rule of life. Two things in view: peace and edification. Liberty is precious, but it has its responsibilities.

b. Destroy not v. 20

Stop destroying is the sense (pres. imperative). The work of God is the issue (cf. v. 15 where "brother" is focus). True, all things are O.K., but evil for whoever performs and causes hurt (cf. v. 13).

CONCLUSION 1. Best to refuse anything to give a weak brother time and help to grow (v. 21). Never be the instrument for a fatality, halting, or weakening wound. 2. Do not use your confidence in Christ's justifying work selfishly; rather, get God's judgment on the matter. You will be blessed (deeper than "happy") if you don't feel self-condemned by the things you accept for yourself. It is rare to have a conscience untouched by scruples. 3. A weak brother must not participate in something if he is unsure of God's approval. To do so is sin. Whatever a believer does, let him have a deep persuasion that it is of God. To have questions and do something is sin.

4. All believers must be patient, loving, and forbearing with one another.