

True Christian people are people of conviction—that is—they have strong convictions concerning what Christians should believe, as well as—how Christians should live—a Christian who hasn't any convictions about what he should believe and how he should live—isn't a very good Christian—Christians are people of conviction...

But—true Christian people are also humble, longsuffering, and loving—to have strong convictions without love—is be brutish and rude—and is not true Christianity—but—to be supposedly humble and loving—but lack any Biblical conviction isn't Christian either—both conviction and love—are equally needed and necessary...

The church at Rome was comprised of two kinds of Christians—[1] the weak were largely, though not exclusively Jews, who felt obligated to keep certain OC dietary and ceremonial laws—thus they sought keep these temporal laws—not as a means to find acceptance with God, as many of the Pharisees, but in gratitude for acceptance...

[2] The strong were largely, though not exclusively Gentiles, who had knowledge of their liberties within the NC—thus they could eat meat, drink wine, and NOT keep the various ceremonial holydays—associated with the OC...

Because Rome was the capital of the Gentile world—it seems the church at Rome had their share of Gentile Christians—thus it seems for this reason—throughout Romans 14—Paul largely speaks to the strong and not weak—which is almost exclusively true of the verses that our before us this morning (with the exception of v23)...

I. Practical Exhortations

II. Needed Clarifications

III. Powerful Motivations

I. Practical Exhortations

A. Pursue peace and edification—v19

1. The first thing that needs explaining is the connection that exists—between v19 and what preceded—"therefore"...
2. That is—because the kingdom is not eating and drinking but righteousness, peace and joy—let us pursue peace...
3. Furthermore—because those who serve Christ in these things (v18)—are acceptable to God and approved by men...
4. That is—those who live by kingdom principles—are pleasing to God and approved by good and wise men...
5. Thus—in light of all this—"therefore let us pursue"—let us labor for—those things that promote the kingdom...
6. [1] Peace—"therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace"—that is—peace among the brethren...
7. In other words—the apostle Paul—understood that the peace and unity of the church—was jeopardized or at risk...
8. Nothing—has more potential to destroy the peace of a local church—then the differences that exists between us...
9. Thus—Paul exhorts the Roman Christians—"let us pursue the things which make for peace"—let us chase after them...
10. That is—the obtaining and maintaining of peace takes work—it doesn't come without diligent and difficult pursuit...
11. Thus—the peace that Paul here refers to is largely synonymous with unity—which is rooted in the TRUTH...

12. [2] Edification—"and the things by which one may edify another"—the word "edify" means—"to build up..."
 13. This is the very opposite of v20—"do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food"—that is the weak...
 14. We're not only to refrain from destroying or tearing them down—we're to actively labor to BUILD them up...
 15. Rom.15:1-2—"We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. 2 Let each of us please *his* neighbor for *his* good, leading to edification..."
 16. That is—put the needs and good of others before your own—which will result in edifying or building them up...
 17. 1Cor.10:23-23—"All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. 24 Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's *well-being*..."
 18. Robert Haldane—"We are not to have an eye merely to our own growth and stability, but also to the growth and stability of the whole body..."
 19. Now—here I want to remind you of an important word in this verse—"therefore let us pursue"—chase after...
 20. That is—Christians are to actively work at promoting mutual edification—or labor at building each other up...
 21. Now—what are "the things which make for peace and edification"—let me suggest a few—love, humility, patience...
 22. [a] Love—there is no peace without love—love seeks the good of others—it puts the needs of others before its own...
 23. 1Cor.8:1—"now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies..."
 24. Now—here we must remember that "knowledge" specifically refers to—the knowledge associated with NC liberty...
 25. That is—knowledge that all meat is clean, even that offered to idols—because—"an idol is nothing in the world" (v4)...
 26. Thus—to merely have the knowledge of what's right and lawful—without love—"puffs up"—or promotes pride...
 27. But—"love edifies"—that is—with the knowledge comes the desire to put the needs of others before our own...
 28. [b] Humility—this of course is essential to peace—if fact—pride and self-seeking are the two enemies of peace...
 29. Simply put—there will never be peace and edification—without humility being maintained on some level...
 30. [c] Patience—that is—if there's going to be peace and edification—we need to forebear with each other in love...
 31. Eph.4:1-3—"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, 2 with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, 3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace..."
 32. Notice—maintaining peace and unity takes—humility, gentleness, patience, love, and effort—"endeavoring to keep the unity..."
- B. Do not destroy the weak—v20
1. V20—"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..."
 2. I think the best way to examine v20—is to separately or distinctly examine the two individual parts of this verse...
 3. [1] Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food—"by the work of God" is meant—the weak brother...
 4. The weak, as with the strong, are the work of God—He's presently building them up in His grace for His glory...

5. This is likely a reference back the need to edify or built up—the point being—God Himself is building the weak...
6. We could broaden this to say—that God is presently building up every Christian—we are God's workmanship...
7. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food—do not flaunt your liberties to the destruction of others...
8. Thus—another way of saying this might be—do not, with your liberties, fight against what God is doing in others...
9. Do not—by flaunting your liberties—tear down what God is building up—to not destroy or harm your brother...
10. [2] All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense—all food is natively pure or clean...
11. Thus—when Paul says—"it is evil for the man who eats with offense"—he doesn't mean that the food is evil...
12. But—he instead is saying—it's "evil" for the weak brother to eat it—that is—it's bad, harmful, or wrong for him...
13. Acting against one's conviction—leaves someone with an evil conscience—that is—a condemning conscience...
14. Thus—Paul reaffirms that eating meat and drinking wine are lawful—the Strong were right in their thinking...
15. This again underscores something that I've mentioned before—Paul isn't apposed to making this point clear...
16. That is—he isn't apposed of instructing the weak more fully with regards to the truth—and their NC liberties...
17. But—the point he's underscoring is this—better to act according to conscience before you are fully convinced...

C. Give up your liberties—v21

1. V21—"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..."
2. The apostle makes a play off his former statement in v16—"therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil..."
3. In v16 the "good" mentioned was their liberty—it was a good thing for them to eat the meat as it was clean...
4. It's a "good" thing for Christians to exercise their NC liberties—these things are good and they please God...
5. But—now he says—"it's good neither to eat meat nor drink wine"—that is—it's a good thing to forgo your liberties...
6. It is a right and noble practice—to be concerned with the views of others—and forgo your liberty for their good...
7. It is good for the strong to eat the meat, yes—it is good for the strong refrain from eating meat for other—yes...
8. Notice—Paul weds together eating meat and drinking wine—why he mentioned the latter is not for certain...
9. It seems probable—that by "drinking wine" is meant—the OC restrictions associated with the Nazarite laws...
10. Barnes—"Wine was a common drink among the Jews, and usually esteemed lawful. But the Nazarites were not allowed to drink it (Num.6:3), and it is possible that some of the early converts regarded it as unlawful for Christians to drink it..."
11. Col.2:16-17—"so let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ..."
12. Here—the apostle does something similar here that he did in Romans 14—reduce the OC into diet and days...

13. Notice—within the DIET he couples together—"food and drink"—that is—eating meat and drinking wine...
14. All of these three things—which represent the entire OC—were typical or shadows of the good things to come...
15. But then—I want to notice that Paul adds—"nor anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended..."
16. That is—there were obviously other issues that were sources of contention—that the apostle Paul doesn't mention...
17. For example, no doubt the grooming restrictions such as not trimming your beard or wearing mixed linens...
18. Furthermore—Paul purposefully uses this broader language—that the principle would be applicable to all ages...

D. Keep to yourself—vv22-23

1. Within these two verses—the apostle provides a contrast between the consciences of the strong and the weak...
2. The conscience of the strong blesses him—while the conscience of the weak condemns him—blessedness and condemnation...
3. [1] Blessedness—"do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves..."
4. Now—by "faith" is meant—the faith or confidence that's built upon a proper knowledge of their NC liberty...
5. That is—Do you believe that it's lawful for you to eat meat and drink wine—then do so—"to yourself before God..."
6. That is—be content to practice your liberties before God—without imposing them upon the weaker brethren...
7. Barnes—"Do not project your faith or opinion on others. Be satisfied with cherishing the opinion, and acting on it in private, without bringing it forward to produce disturbance in the church..."
8. That is—don't go out of your way—to prove your liberty—but enjoy your liberties in the presence of God...
9. "Happy (blessed) is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves"—that is—who can act with a good conscience...
10. There is a true blessedness that accompanies a good conscience—a conscience void of offense to God and man...
11. [2] Condemnation—"but he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin..."
12. The person who eats meat when his conscience isn't convinced—is sinning because—he's acting without faith...
13. Heb.11:6—"but without faith it is impossible to please Him"—whatever we do—has to be done in or by faith...
14. In other words—the Lord isn't satisfied with mere outward actions—but judges the motives or intents of the heart...
15. Thus—it isn't good enough to do what's right—but we must do what's right—with a right heart and a right motive...
16. It's for this reason—everything an unbeliever does is in some sense sin—because everything he does is without faith...
17. Thus—the issue isn't so much that the weak Christian acts against his conscience—but that he acts without faith...

II. Needed Clarifications

1. Here—I want to stand back—and provide several general or generic clarifications especially with regards to v21...

2. But in order to do so—I want to use a rather simple example—that I trust carries no great controversy with it...
3. That is—the practice of drinking wine or alcohol—I want to assert that the Scriptures do not condemn this practice...
4. This is expressly seen in v21—"it is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine"—by inference—these are liberties...
5. Christians have the liberty to eat meat—all meat—and Christians have the liberty to drink wine or alcohol...
6. Thus—a qualification for an elder is—"he must not be addicted to wine"—not—"he must not drink wine..."
7. Now—keep in mind that I'm simply using this practice as an example of something—that Christians differ on...
8. Let's say there are two men in the church—one has the conviction that Christians should never drink—let's call him Tom...
9. Then there is another man within the same church—who believes Christians can drink in moderation—let's call him Jerry...
10. Now—as I have shown—strictly speaking—Jerry is right—drinking is NOT in itself wrong and is a liberty...
11. But—Jerry hears about Tom's strict views—how should he act—should he automatically give up his liberty...
12. Well—this is what I want to address—byway of providing you with three general or generic clarifications...
13. [1] Christians are not slaves to the opinions of others—this is I think, an important point to clarify first off...
14. Christians have been freed from the law as a covenant, the ceremonial law, and the opinions and traditions of men...
15. Thus—I do not think that Paul is teaching—every Christian has to conform to the stricter opinions of others...
16. Otherwise—the entire church would be reduced to the views and opinions of the strictest member in the church...
17. That is—there would be no diversity within the church—everyone would have to conform to the strictest view...
18. Thus—to use our example—just because Tom is opposed to drinking—Jerry doesn't automatically have to stop...
19. Otherwise—no person in the church could anything—that someone else in the church—chose NOT to do...
20. Thus—in light of this first clarification—we have to remember—Christians will not be identical in every way...
21. The members of the church at Rome had rather large differences—yet they were one unified and peaceful church...
22. Christians—are bound to Scripture—they are slaves of Christ—they are not slaves to the opinions of others...
23. Now—I don't want you to misunderstand me—I'm not suggesting—we should never give lawful things up...
24. There are some things that I've given up—not because they were sinful—but for the good of other brethren...
25. Thus—while Christians may not have to give something up—they should at least be willing if its necessary...
26. [2] Christians should be sensitive to the opinions of others—that is—we have to be concerned with what others believe...
27. Thus—Jerry should be aware that Tom has these strict views—and be careful what he says while in Tom's presence...
28. For example—for Jerry to speak about a new wine that he just bought while in Tom's presence—is insensitive...

29. Thus—it becomes very important for us to be aware of the various views and differences that exist among us...
30. It amazes me brethren—that someone can be a member of this church—and remain ignorant of what others think...
31. Now—I don't mean we have to know what everyone believes on every subject—but we must have a concern...
32. Why—so that I can be sensitive to what I do and say in regards to others—that I will not offend or harm them...
33. 1Cor.8:13—"therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble..."
34. 1Cor.9:19—"for though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more..."
35. [3] Christians should be able to discuss the opinions of others—that is—we have to allow our practices to be questioned...
36. For example—Tom approaches Jerry with love and in humility—and he encourages him to reconsider his view...
37. What should Jerry do—well, let me tell you—he should humble and prayerfully consider what Tom tells him...
38. For brethren—we all have to agree—it's possible that all of us are doing something—that not be good or right...
39. I mean—I've had dozens of people over the past ten years approach me about something my family and I do...
40. Now—I haven't always stopped doing it just because they think I should—but I always listen and consider it...

III. Powerful Motivations

1. Here—I simply want to point out—that while this subject can be difficult—Paul provides several gospel motives...
2. And this underscores a point that I have made many times over the years—the relation between law and gospel...
3. Christians are to obey the law—but they are to obey the law by the power, grace, and incentives of the gospel...
4. Thus—it's very instructive to notice the motives the apostle provides—for Christians to receive one another...
5. I want to suggest that basically—he provides three closely related motives—Christ's person, work, and example...
6. [1] Christ's person—that is—Christ as the exalted Lord and Master—is the one to whom all are responsible...
7. All Christians, weak or strong, Jew or Gentile, man or female, adult or child—are all slaves to the same Master...
8. [2] Christ's work—that is—how did Christ obtain this exalted position—but in reward to His atoning work...
9. Rom.14:9—"for this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living..."
10. [3] Christ's body—that is—the spiritual body of Christ—the church—His bride—His building—that He's building up...
11. The church is Christ's building—which is being built upon His word with Christ Himself the chief cornerstone...
12. Thus—to cause our brethren to stumble—is to destroy God's building—which is inseparable from its foundation...
13. That is—to put it as plain as possible—to sin against our weak or strong brethren—is to sin against Christ...
14. 1Cor.8:12—"but when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ..."