

Love the One for Whom Christ Died Romans 14:10-15

Context: Romans 14:1-15:13 concerns issues of conscience in the use of Christian liberty and how we are to relate to our brethren who have different convictions about such matters.

- *Example:* Drinking alcohol

Question: What are the main ideas in Romans 14:10-15?

Why do you pass judgment on your brother? (10-12)

verse 10

Refers to the two behaviors prohibited in **verse 3**

1. Refers to a believer who has faith to exercise Christian liberty, and another believer who does not have faith to do so.
2. The one with such faith is not to despise the other.
 - Not to despise him for his weakness
 - Such despising might be expressed in looking down on him as a “legalist”
3. The one who does not have such faith is not to pass judgment on the other.
 - Not to judge his use of liberty as sin
 - Such judging might be expressed in judging him as “worldly”

The apostle appeals to the future judgment seat of God to teach that we have no valid reason to judge or despise our brother in matters of conscience.

vv 10b-12

10 “the judgment seat”

- “In ancient times, a *bema* was a raised platform or step used in athletic or political arenas. Rulers or judges would ascend the *bema* to render decisions in legal cases. Pilate judged Jesus from his *bema* seat (Matt 27:19; John 19:13). In athletic events, an authority figure would be elevated to a *bema* to judge the competition and award the winners.”¹

¹ John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds., *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth*, 864.

Quotes from Isaiah 45:23, which is preceded by emphatic, repeated declarations of God's unique Lordship

Is. 45:5-6 I am the LORD, and there is no other,
besides me there is no God;
I equip you, though you do not know me,
that people may know, from the rising of the sun
and from the west, that there is none besides me;
I am the LORD, and there is no other.

18 "...I am the LORD, and there is no other."

21-22 ...And there is no other god besides me,
a righteous God and a Savior;
there is none besides me.
Turn to me and be saved,
all the ends of the earth!
For I am God, and there is no other.

In context, the Lord is saying in Isaiah 45:23 that to Him alone every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess.

The apostle quotes this passage to substantiate two points:

10 "we will all stand before the judgment seat of God"

- All believers

12 "So then each of us will give an account of himself to God."

- Means each of us will be held accountable by God, and will have to answer to Him
- We will give an account of ourselves, not everyone else

Consequently...

1. When we judge or despise our brother, we usurp God's position
2. The verdict that matters is God's
3. We are accountable to God for how we treat our brother

Decide never to put a stumbling block in the way of a brother (13-15)

Question: Looking at verses 13-15, what is to be our chief motivation to never put a stumbling block in the way of a brother?

verse 13

“pass judgment...decide”

1. In Greek this is a play on words. The same word *krino* is used with two different meanings.
2. **LSB** “Therefore let us not **judge** one another anymore, but rather **judge** this—not to put a stumbling block or offense before a brother.”

“stumbling block...hindrance”

1. Synonyms
2. NASB “obstacle...stumbling block”
CSB “stumbling block...pitfall”
NKJV “stumbling block...cause to fall”
3. Both terms speak here of an impediment which may cause a person to trip or stumble
4. In context, the apostle is speaking of a use of Christian liberty that may cause a brother to stumble into sin

verse 14

“I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself...”

1. The Lord Jesus fulfilled the Mosaic Law and made all foods clean
2. **Mark 7:18–20** And he said to them, “Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?” (Thus **he declared all foods clean.**) And he said, “What comes out of a person is what defiles him.”
3. **Acts 10:13–16** And there came a voice to him: “Rise, Peter; kill and eat.” But Peter said, “By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.” And the voice came to him again a second time, “**What God has made clean, do not call common.**” This happened three times...
4. **1 Tim. 4:1–5** Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and require abstinence from **foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.**

“...but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean.”

1. If you think it unclean but eat it anyway, it is as if you are eating something God has prohibited
2. **verse 23**

So doing something without a clear conscience is sin. Consequently, if my use of liberty will encourage my brother to go against his conscience, it would amount to putting a stumbling block in his way.

We can put a stumbling block in our brother's way by...

1. Doing in front of him what his conscience does not allow
2. Asking him to do it
3. Trying to persuade him to do it
4. Putting pressure on him to do it

verse 15a

“if you brother is grieved by what you eat”

1. Means his sensitive conscience is pained
2. Grieved as he sees you do what he feels is wrong, or even more, as he violates his conscience

“you are no longer walking in love”

1. Lit, **NASB 1995** “no longer walking according to love”
2. The love of Christ is a standard for how we are to walk
3. **John 13:34** “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.”
4. **Romans 12:9a, 10a; 13:8-10**

The apostle gives this as a reason for not putting a stumbling block in the way of a brother.

verse 15b

“destroy”

1. The apostle uses a strong word, communicating the great seriousness of encouraging a brother to sin
2. Destroy his spiritual well-being and growth
3. Encouraging your brother to go against conscience is not edifying but destructive

“the one for whom Christ died”

1. Speaks of particular atonement
2. **John 10:14-15** “I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.”
3. Since Christ loved him in this way, we are to show a special love to him

4. Do not destroy one who is so loved by Christ

“By what you eat”

- *Douglas Moo*: “If, Paul implies, Christ has already paid the supreme price for that ‘weak’ Christian, how can the ‘strong’ refuse to pay the quite insignificant price of a minor and occasional restriction in their diet?”²

In summary, verses 13-15 teach...

1. Do not put a stumbling block in the way of a brother
2. If your brother is grieved by your exercise of liberty, you are no longer walking in love
3. By your use of liberty, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died

So...

1. It is not enough for a Christian that a certain course is not inherently wrong. He must also consider the effect it would have on his brothers.
2. The issue is not if the Christian has freedom in Christ to do something, but how he should exercise or waive that freedom on the basis of how it will affect others
3. We must be more concerned about the spiritual wellbeing of our brother than about our use of our freedom

Conclusion

The whole passage can be summarized as:

1. Do not pass judgment on your brother, for we will all stand before the judgment seat of God
2. Do not put a stumbling block in the way of a brother for whom Christ died

Once again, we are taught to live with one eye on Christ’s second coming, and one eye on the cross!

² Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 855.