



(For access to all available commentaries and sermons of Charlie's click [HERE](#))

Romans

Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. Romans 14:22

Paul is speaking to believers, therefore he is speaking to people of faith. Because this is so, the logical conclusion is that his question, "Do you have faith?" Is not speaking of saving faith. Instead, it is speaking of the faith which is implied in verses 14-21. This is faith to act in disputable matters. For example, the person who has "faith" to eat all things as opposed to those who lack the faith to eat certain foods. In such an instance, when it will obviously harm another to exercise your faith, then restrain from doing so.

Many Jewish believers don't eat pork. Whether you feel that is right or wrong, would it be right to invite such a friend to your house and serve ham along with the other food? No! Nor would it be right to invite them over and, even without serving ham, argue the point that ham is ok thus insinuating that they aren't acting like mature Christians. These are the kinds of things that can only lead to unhappiness in them. In turn it will lead to unhappiness in you. Instead of such an attitude, exercise your faith before God, exercise your freedoms when they won't harm, and don't cause an air of animosity to arise over such disputable matters.

And Paul explains why - "Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves." By acting in this manner you are actually bringing condemnation on yourself. Again, this is not speaking of condemnation from salvation, as if such a matter could cause the loss of salvation. Rather it is speaking of condemning

thoughts. Such thoughts are, as will be revealed in the next verse, what leads to sin. This is also revealed to us by John in his first epistle

"Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God." 1 John 3:21

Life application: Just because we have the right to do certain things, and just because we have the faith to exercise that right, it doesn't make it right to follow through with that thing if it will cause another to violate their conscience. By causing others to sin, we sin.

But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin. Romans 14:23

To complete the chapter, Paul finishes with this notable and to-the-point statement. The "but" is given as a contrast to what he just said in verse 22 -

"Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves."

If you have faith, exercise your faith before God. Don't lord it over others and don't cause others to stumble. Use your faith as a tool for sanctification, not destruction. If you have faith, eat without conscience and be grateful for what you have been provided.

On the other hand, where faith is lacking, there is doubt. As we are limited beings, we cannot know everything perfectly. There will always be areas where we are unsure. Therefore, doubt cannot be sin. However, doubt can be the cause of sin. This is what Paul will show us now. "But he who doubts is condemned if he eats." The clear understanding of this is that if someone feels that they shouldn't be eating something, pork for example, and they eat it in order to fit in or because

they feel coerced, then they sin. Not because eating pork is wrong (as is clearly shown in chapter 14), but because they are in a state of doubt concerning what they are eating. And the reason for this is "because he does not eat from faith."

If you are eating something under any type of compulsion, then it can't be from faith. Faith, by its very definition, involves doing something which isn't forbidden, with a clear conscience, and without coercion. Calling on Jesus as Lord implies the exercising of faith in the fact that Jesus is Lord. If one is forced to call on Him, then they haven't really called on Him. The same is true with something as simple as having certain foods for dinner.

A Christian who has pork chops for dinner and who eats with a clear conscience, implies that he believes Christ has fulfilled the Levitical laws prescribed in the Old Testament (because these laws forbid the eating of pork). If one believes this, as the Bible demonstrates is true, then Jesus must be Lord. Why? Because if the law is fulfilled in Him, then it died with Him. If we are calling on Jesus as Lord and accepting His work, then we must believe that He rose again because one cannot call on a dead Lord. If the law was fulfilled in Him, and then He died under the law, then the law died with Him. If He rose again, then a New Covenant must be in place. If a New Covenant is in place which says that nothing is unclean of itself (Romans 14:14), then accepting that by faith implies that Jesus is Lord.

But... if one eats pork because he feels coerced, then he is not eating from faith. And "whatever is not from faith is sin." If someone doesn't understand the work of Christ in the manner described above concerning the law, then they may feel that dietary restrictions still apply. However, to fit in or for whatever other reason, they may feel pressured to eat pork. If they do so, even though there is nothing wrong with eating pork in and of itself, they are not eating from faith and thus they sin.

Pork has been the example here, but Paul says "whatever" is not from faith is sin. If one violates their conscience in a matter in order to be pleasing to others, they are not acting in faith. Is it better to be a man-pleaser or one who pleases God? God is pleased with faith. That is the lesson of the Bible.

As a final thought on this, although it is acceptable to not eat pork, it is not acceptable to teach that it is not acceptable to not eat pork. And there is a difference. The Bible has shown that eating it (or any other food) is now all right. Therefore, to teach that it is not okay is to violate what the Bible teaches. This then no longer is a matter of conscience, but a matter of doctrine. To violate doctrine through incorrect teaching is sin. Be careful to know the difference.

Life application: Romans 14 has shown that eating all foods and drinking anything one wishes is acceptable. To teach otherwise is sin. And to eat any food apart from conscience is also sin. However, to abstain from any food or drink is not sin. Know the difference and be prepared to defend your knowledge.

We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Romans 15:1

Chapter 15 begins with a note admonishing those who are strong in the faith - "We then who are strong..." This obviously includes Paul himself and he is speaking out in plea to those who are like him. Being strong in the faith is described in the previous chapter and he now brings the thought of those words into a request for harmony within the church.

Those who understand their freedoms and who aren't challenged by the "disputable matters" that arise should "bear with the scruples of the weak." Matters of diet and days of observance are not to be treated as if they were to be the end of fellowship and a source of division. Rather, the stronger in the faith have the onus on them to accept those who practice differently or who fail to see the complete freedom found in the finished work of Jesus. Instead of lording their knowledge and freedom over the weak, they are to bear with their habits and not merely please themselves. This is the heart of love which he writes about elsewhere, such as 1 Corinthians 13.

And as a case demonstration of this, Paul writes these words to the Corinthians in his first letter to them -

"For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." 1 Corinthians 9:19-22

Throughout Acts, Paul is shown to be empathetic to those who were lesser informed or who were weaker in the faith. However, he also stood against heresy and those who would put confusion into the minds of believers. He had a balanced approach to his handling of such matters. When someone was not following the faith in a proper manner because of a lack of knowledge, he stooped down to their level and worked within their state to edify them and also instruct them. However, when someone wasn't following the faith in a proper manner but who should have known better, he challenged them openly (see Galatians 2:11-16 where he confronts Peter head on).

This is the proper way to conduct affairs and this is what Paul appeals to today.

Life application: Determine the situation concerning a challenge to right doctrine and act accordingly. If the person is ignorant of a matter, handle them as you would your own child - with love and instruction. If the person is aware of what is right and acts contrary to the truth, handle them as a trouble-maker, with bold determination to not let them harm others' faith.

Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification.

Romans 15:2

To edify means to build up. Paul just introduced chapter 15 with a statement that the strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak; not to please themselves. Bearing with the weak is to tolerate their weakness, not find fault in it. Rather

than following a course which picks away at their already weak foundation, we are admonished to work with them. And so, speaking to the body of believers, he asks that "each of us please his neighbor for his good."

A neighbor can be defined in the broader sense of our fellow man, and we should strive for the good toward all men it is true, but based on the context, he is asking us to evaluate our conduct towards our neighbors in Christ. It is to them that we should endeavor to be pleasing in a way which will lead to edification.

The idea is to build up the body, promoting harmony within the faith and to bear the burdens of the weaker without finding fault. The world at large is watching and evaluating Christ based on His servants. It's true that some profess Christ who aren't really in Christ, but to weed them out is where right belief and right practice are to be defined. We can't do this if we don't know our instruction manual. But by knowing the word and defining the parameters, we can then endeavor to bear with those who are weak within those confines.

Life application: Doctrine does matter. Once we have right doctrine, then we need to accommodate those whose practices are weak within that context. By doing so, we will build up, not tear down, our fellow believers.

For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me." Romans 15:3

To give us an explicit example of how we should act in "disputable matters" Paul refers to the example of Christ Himself. He has just shown that we should "bear with the scruples of the weak" and not attempt to merely please ourselves. In essence, "Is our temporary gratification worth bringing discord between saved believers?" Rather, we should be willing to let these things rest and to instead serve for the sake of Christ and not self.

In substantiation of this, He cites the 9th verse of the 69th Psalm -

"Because zeal for Your house has eaten me up,
And the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me."

John 2:17 refers directly to this same verse and applies it to the time when Jesus cleared the temple. He was interested in the honor of God, not pleasing Himself. And this is seen throughout the rest of His ministry. When He was tired, He still served others. When He was hungry, He never failed to make sure others were fed. When He faced the agony of the cross, He asked that His Father's will, not His, would be done.

And throughout it all, He received reproach and contempt. If He was doing the will of the Father, then the contempt was directed ultimately toward the Father, but it instead fell on Him. This then is our example. If our actions and conduct are correct and in line with Scripture and yet someone finds fault in them, then ultimately they are finding fault in the One who authored Scripture. But in order to glorify the Lord, we should let the reproaches of those who reproach Christ fall on us.

By doing this, Christ was able to change hearts and minds. And that is exactly what we are asked to do. Through our willingness to not argue over these disputable matters, we will ultimately be able to change the weaker brother to understand what is right and acceptable. Paul will show us this in the coming verses. Our actions are to be with the intent and purpose of bringing the body to a place of harmony, agreement, and of being of one mind, even in disputable matters.

In Hebrews 10, we read the following -

"Therefore, when He came into the world, He said:

'Sacrifice and offering You did not desire,
But a body You have prepared for Me.
In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin

You had no pleasure.
Then I said, 'Behold, I have come—
In the volume of the book it is written of Me—
To do Your will, O God.'" Hebrews 10:5-7

Christ Jesus came in a body of flesh to do the will of God. And it was this will of God that was His driving purpose and sole aim. Where "sacrifice and offering" (things mandated under the law) failed to please God, Christ was able to be pleasing. And this is what is expected of us. We can exercise our liberties in Christ and yet not be pleasing to God because of how it affects others.

Life application: Christ is our example. If we can continuously remember this in every thing we do, then we can know how to properly conduct our affairs. Jesus never sacrificed doctrine in order to accommodate others. Nor did He excuse a violation of the law in others. However, He worked within the framework of the law to show us the heart of His Father. This is what we are asked to do within the framework of our Christian liberties.

For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

Romans 15:4

Paul just quoted the 69th Psalm. Now as a way of showing that the Old Testament still has value and is to be relied on and consulted, he begins with "for." This ties us to the quote and is a way for him to remind us that we should rely on the wisdom found there in order to understand the work of Christ more fully.

In fact, the Old Testament Scriptures were the only Scriptures at Paul's time and they are what he and the other apostles relied on to understand and explain the work of Jesus. Nothing has changed since the completion of the New Testament either. The Old Testament is not to be discarded in our pursuit of spiritual knowledge.

The quote from the 69th Psalm was speaking, in a large way, about the patient endurance of Christ during His ministry. In reading that, Paul's mind may have suddenly thought something like, "And isn't that what we are to find for ourselves as we search the Scriptures?" And so he equates our journey through them as a journey of spiritual understanding, particularly in how it relates to our relationship with Christ.

And so he notes that "whatever things were written before were written for our learning." These Old Testament Scriptures which took hundreds and hundreds of years to come forth, didn't lose their relevance when Christ came. Instead, they became relevant in an entirely new way. For us, they now, "through the patience and comfort" found in them might provide us hope.

Keeping this verse in context with the train of thought that he has been pursuing, this "patience and comfort" then is directly tied to our conduct among the brethren concerning "doubtful matters." Paul isn't suddenly jumping out of his previous discourse. Instead, he is tying this psalm and the application he has derived from it directly to the concept of the fraternal bonds of Christian fellowship. This will be evident from the coming two verses.

Life application: The Bible reveals a harmony between the New Testament and the Old . The two testaments contrast and yet they confirm each other. There is the law and there is grace. They contrast and yet they confirm the whole counsel of God. In order to understand the fullness of God's intent for us, we need to study and apply the entirety of Scripture to our lives.