Romans 14 - Do Not Destroy the Work of God

It's hard for us to imagine what Peter had to overcome to walk into Cornelius's house. Everything in his upbringing told him to keep his distance from Gentiles, and now Jesus was telling him to cross that line.

- ***Acts 10:28 -*** *You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean.*
- Peter had to **let God challenge** what he had always believed was right before he could **take part in what God was doing next.**

The Point - As Jesus moved his disciples to reach all nations, a clash of culture and religious devotion arose.

- **Romans 14 is an historical example of this.**
- Jewish believers expelled…church became largely a Gentile church
- When the Jewish believers returned - they found great differences — convictions about food and special days.
- What one person called **unnecessary** another called **devotion,** What one called **freedom**, another called **compromise**.
- Paul teaches to remain united tho' we disagree around **"disputable matters"** (ie issues of Christian belief, practice, or personal conviction that Scripture does not explicitly command or forbid - people may reach different conclusions while remaining faithful to the Lord.

Our issues look different today but we still have them (clothing, tattoos, alcohol, holidays, entertainment, education, politics).

> **EXAMPLE:** Calvary Chapel, "No Bare Feet." Chuck Smith → if the new carpet kept young people from hearing the gospel, he'd rip it out and meet on bare concrete.

Welcome him for God has welcomed him

Slide 2 1 As for the one who is weak in faith, ***welcome*** him, but not to quarrel over opinions. 2 One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. 3 Let not the one who eats **despise** the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains **pass judgment** on the one who eats, ***for God has welcomed him*****.** 4 Who are you to **pass judgmen**t on the **servant of another**? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be **upheld**, for ***the Lord is able to make him stand.***

- **Weak in faith** not less spiritual, rather **not yet fully grasped the freedom** they have in Christ
- **Welcome** - more than tolerate → to **receive** kindly, **admit** to one's friendship, **treat with kindness**
- **Opinions** - NIV "disputable matters" → not speaking about clear or specific commands (adultery, lying)
- **Do not Despise** - to treat with contempt, look down on, ridicule; **or pass judgment** (that's for Jesus)
- **He will be upheld → The LORD is able to make him stand…[establish]**

EXAMPLE: (Rich Philips) There was not a place in the bible I could point to and say "thou shalt not play your guitar in a bar" - the LORD upheld Him and he led him and made him stand

Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

Slide 3 5 One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be **fully convinced in his own mind.** 6 The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, **eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God.** **Slide 4** 7 For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. 8 For if we live, **we live to the Lord**, and if we die, **we die to the Lord**. So then, whether we live or whether we die, **we are the Lord'**s. 9 For to this end Christ died and lived again, **that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.**

- Do you realize that the issues mentioned are on polar opposite ends of the issue —
  - both are honoring the LORD — both give thanks to God — Jesus is Lord of both.
  - **Neither group gets to dictate every matter of conscience for the other.**

- This is about disputable matters…it is not saying everyone has their own truth -- some things are biblical absolutes → adultery is always wrong, stealing is always wrong…(you can't say it must be right because I am fully convinced in my own mind it is ok)
- **It's about the LORDship of Jesus in our lives (teach lordship not personal conviction)**

Each of us will give an account of himself to God

Slide 5 10 Why do you **pass judgment** on your brother? Or you, why do you **despise** your brother? For we will all stand before **the judgment seat of God;** 11 for it is written, "**As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me**, and **every tongue shall confess to God**." 12 So then **each of us will give an account of himself to God.**13 Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but **rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way** of a brother.

- Judging? Despising? - each can damage the other - decide to never put a stumbling block in the way
- This is what happens when we assume our way of doing things is the standard for everyone else. We begin evaluating people by our own preferences rather than by what God has actually said.
- **That tendency can become a serious obstacle to evangelism and discipleship…because people feel they have to jump through certain hoops to walk with Jesus - Peter in Galatia**

Don't destroy the one Jesus died for, don't destroy the work of God

Slide 6 14 **I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself,** but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. 15 For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, ***do not destroy the one*** **for whom Christ died**. 16 So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil. **Slide 7** 17 **For the kingdom of God** is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. 18 **Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God** and approved by men. 19 So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. 20 **Do not, for the sake of food, *destroy the work of God*.** Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats.

- This is a kingdom mindset…the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking…it is righteousness, peace and joy in the holy spirit - **don't destroy the work Jesus is trying to accomplish in the world**

In some cases it is best to mind your own business

Slide 8 21 It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble. 22 The faith that you have, **keep between yourself and God**. Blessed is the one who has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves. 23 But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.

- Conscience is important, so don't violate yours (14:23) BUT don't impose yours on others either
- Your conscience governs your obedience, don't make it the Holy Ghost for everybody else

Conclusion: Jesus welcomes all people (**He is Savior**) → (**He is Lord)** and able to make them stand → (**He is judge)** to whom all must give account → (**He is builder of His church)** into which he brings all people

We should make room for the people Jesus wants to reach…even if they are different from us…even if they carry different convictions than us…we have to trust that Jesus has welcomed them, that He will make them stand, and that He is the ultimate judge…all we owe them is to love.

As the gospel reaches more & people, those differences will multiply. So the question is: will we be kingdom builders, or will we because of disputable matters destroy the work of God?