

Romans 14:10–23

Exercising Liberty in Love Like the Lord's

Monday, May 6, 2024 • Read Romans 14:10–23

Questions from the Scripture text: What question does v10a ask of the weaker brother? What question does v10b ask of the stronger brother? What must we all do (v10c), that shows how foolish it is either to judge or despise a brother? What had YHWH been saying (cf. Isa 45:21–22) in the text that v11 quotes (cf. Isa 45:23)? How does the Lord swear (v11b)? What two things will be done to Him (v11c–d)? Who is this YHWH from Isa 45:23 (cf. Php 2:10)? In addition to our praising Him, what else does this mean will happen (v12)? What must we not do to one another (v13)? What do we do instead? What two things do we resolve not to do? How is the apostle convinced (v14, v20)? Of what? But to whom is a food unclean? What if we cause a brother the sorrow of a defiled conscience (v15)? What might result (v16)? What are people in danger of treating as the kingdom (v17)? But what is it actually? Whom does this please (v18)? What must we pursue (v19a)? In order to do what (v19b)? What is good (v21)? What else is good/happy (v22)? But what sort of "liberty" is not happy but condemned (v23)? Why?

How should the strong act? Romans 14:10–23 prepares us for the sermon in the midweek prayer meeting. In these fourteen verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **the strong should use liberty for building up the weak.**

Don't judge or despise, but help. v10–13. We heard in vv1–9 that the fact that there are weaker brothers and stronger brothers is a providence of God that brings us together showing that the Lord Jesus alone is Master of the church, and Master of each individual church member. So the first great application was that we would live and die unto the Lord.

Now these verses make a second application: that we should seek to help one another (v13) as those who must stand before the Lord (v12). Rivalry, self-trust, and self-righteousness are utterly foolish for the same reason as idolatry (cf. Isa 45:21–22). YHWH alone reigns supreme, and YHWH alone saves, because YHWH alone can make righteous (cf. Isa 45:23). Since neediness is of the essence of true faith, and the pursuit of true holiness, preparing to stand before God is good reason to look to God to use our brother to help us, and to use us to help our brother (v13, cf. Mt 7:1–12).

Don't just be correct; handle it correctly, v14–18. Again, the apostle reminds us that the strong brother is correct that no foods are now unclean, since the apostle is convinced of this "by the Lord Jesus" (v14a). But the defilement of the conscience is real defilement (v14b, 20). Though the biblical conduct of corporate life mustn't be up for debate (v1), the individual believer can forego personal liberties, in a variety of contexts, until the weaker brother's conscience has been better instructed, and he can come to the biblical conclusion with a good will.

If a brother is pressured to violate conscience, so that he ends up with real, spiritual sorrow, this is not loving building up but hateful destruction (v15). So the strong brother must maintain his good position, but apply it in a good way, lest he bring slander upon that very position (v16). It is true that the kingdom brought in a new age of what one may eat, but this eating and drinking are side-effects of the kingdom, not the substance of the kingdom (v17). The profoundly immature make a big deal out of eating and drinking rather than emphasizing righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. To emphasize what Christ emphasizes is to serve Him, rather than our flesh; this is both pleasing to God and a trustworthy way of operating with men (v18).

Pursue peace, build it up, and operate according to faith, v19–23. If we are to build one another up, then we must pursue peace (v19). This seems obvious; if the relationship is destroyed, how can the stronger convince the weaker "with all patience and teaching" (cf. 2Tim 4:2)? So in his personal life, it is not wrong but loving for the stronger to conceal from the weaker his enjoyment of his liberty (v21–22). Otherwise, he may lead the weaker brother into genuine sin (v23), which is a dreadful sin for the strong to commit (cf. Mt 18:6–7). If we are not convinced from Scripture that the Lord approves of what we do, then what we do is truly sin.

When have you restrained which liberties for the building up of another? What is an example of something in which your conscience has been better informed by Scripture so that you could enjoy new liberty with a clear conscience?

Sample prayer: Lord, to You our knees bow and tongues confess. By the ministry of Your Spirit, convince us of all that Your Word truly teaches. And grant that we might be useful in Your doing so in our brothers' lives we ask through Christ, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP197 "Christian Unity" or TPH409 "Blest Be the Tie That Binds"

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Romans 14 verses 10 through 23. These are God's words. But why do you judge your brother or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the Judgment seat of Christ. For it is written. As I live, says the Lord.

Every knee shall bow to me and every tongue shall confess to God. So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. Therefore, let us not judge one another anymore. But rather resolve this. Not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way.

I know and I'm convinced by the Lord Jesus. That there is nothing unclean of itself. But to him who considers anything to be unclean to him. It is unclean. If your brother is grieved because of your food. You are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food, the one for whom Christ died.

Therefore, do not let your good be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking. But righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men. Therefore, let us pursue the things which make for peace.

And the things by which one may edify another. 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 a fence. 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? Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God? Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. But he who doubts is condemned. If he eats because he does not eat from faith. For whatever is not from.

So far the reading of God's inspired and And Aaron twerk.

In this part of the chapter. Apostle pivots, especially to instructing the strong brother, the one, who knows, from scripture from the Lord Jesus. that there is no such thing as food that is ceremonially unclean anymore and he may eat whatever he wishes remember last week, it was the weaker brother.

Especially who was tempted to judgment of the stronger brother because the weaker brother is still holding on to all of these laws that belong to the Mosaic Administration. And keeping more laws. As he thinks to himself, gives more opportunity for him. to think judgmentally and pronounce judgment on those who actually are, right?

And who are strong. And so the weaker brother must especially watch against. Judgmentalism, but the stronger brother. Knowing that he is strong and that his weaker brother is weak. is especially Tempted to contempt or despising and devaluing. The weaker brother. As if the weaker brother's weakness makes him less valuable or less of a brother.

Which, of course, the value. Of. A Believer is in Christ himself. The usefulness of a Believer is in Christ. Himself. And so, the stronger brother must not think that way of his

weaker brother. And so, verse 10 is summarizing, what we heard in the first 10 verses? But as he moves now into verses 11 through 23, he reminds us that Christ before whom we stand is the only one in whom there is any righteousness or salvation or life.

The quote here in verse 11 is from Isaiah 45 verse 23 and it is about Yahweh over against the idols. And why would you hope in anyone else for? It is the Lord alone who can save and it is the Lord alone in in this case who can make us stand.

And marvelously. That which is written of Yahweh. In Isaiah 45, verse 23 and quoted here in verse 11, is actually written of the Lord, the son, God, the son, the Lord Jesus as Philippians 2 makes clear quoting from the same verse, but very specifically with respect to him who died and the death on the cross.

For which reason, God has given him. The name that is above every other name. even as it is written and he quotes the same verse. So each of us give an account of ourselves to go out. Each of us, give an account to ourselves to God in Christ.

And if Christ is going to make each of us stand as the Lord told the weaker brother about the stronger brother back in verse 4, then we must not be judgmental towards. We're devaluing of Any of our brothers. and He addresses in the first part of verse 13, the weaker brother but that which controls the rest of the chapter in the second half of verse 13 is especially for the stronger brother.

Let us rather resolve this. Not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall. In our brother's way. Now as far as the corporate worship of the church goes, as far as that, which is done in the public worship and the practices of the church, none of these things.

May be modified to accommodate the conscience of the weaker brother. He is to be welcomed. You remember in verse 1, but not for disputes, not to introduce. controversy or division. Of thought or practice? No. the church will continue to practice according to the scripture but In our personal life in our interaction.

With the weaker brother. We must watch not to guard our Liberty to please ourselves but we must watch to walk in love. Towards our brother. And so he's basically saying here In verses 14 through 18, don't just be correct. Handle it correctly. Again, it's very plain. The weaker brother is wrong.

the Apostle says I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus. That's a very strong statement. He's saying that although the weaker brother believes that he is taking his position from the Bible, he's just wrong. The Lord Jesus teaches the opposite of the what, the weaker brother believes in the Bible.

But when the Apostle Phrases it. So strongly as this, it makes his warning in his application to those who are strong all the more forceful For it is the Apostle, who believes that the scripture says, That all food is clean. All food is is pure. Nothing is unclean of itself.

Verse 14. Are all things indeed are pure. Verse 20. But, If the weaker brother isn't convinced of that from the Bible. And he eats the food that is in itself clean. He still defiles his own conscience. So verse 14 to him who considers anything to be unclean to him.

It is unclean. And verse 20. It is evil for the man who eats with offense. In verse 23. He who doubts is condemned. If he eats Because he does not eat from. For whatever is not from faith is sin. And so, If we. Are so focused on insisting upon our Liberty.

And getting the weaker brother to enjoy the same Liberty of action. As we enjoy. But we are not patient. For the weaker brother to come to the same Liberty of conscience. That he would be doing this not to fit in with the stronger brother. Not because he's Looking at the stronger brother and saying, well, I guess he's a stronger brother and he seems to be convinced from the Bible.

I might as well. Do the thing. But the weaker brother still has not been convinced from the Bible. Then we bring upon him sorrow. Because he's going to do the thing that is that he's not convinced of from his conscience and what's going to happen to him. When he comes back and he's by himself with the Lord, and he's done this thing that he believes violates his conscience.

Is he not going to be grieved in his conscience? Is he not going to be sorrowful before the Lord? The way that you're sorrowful? When you sin against the Lord and you realize that you've done it again, especially you come to the next time of of secret worship and you start reading and you start praying and you and you Comes rushing back upon you what you've done since the last time you were on worship and that sorrow and that grief So he says, don't.

Don't do. That which you have Liberty to do. If it brings sorrow yet, if your brother is grieved because of your food sorrowful because of your food, he says you're no longer walking in love, do not destroy with your food, the one for whom Christ died, So, you want to talk about giving up Liberty?

Can't you give up for a meal? Because your weaker brother happens to be there with you. Your bacon or your shrimp or your Lobster. Jesus. Added to himself, Humanity. Humiliated himself to take the form of the bond slave. And he gave up his life. Don't destroy with your food, the one for whom.

Christ died. And that's really a great way. to put others first. To remind yourself when you're interacting with them and you feel constrained by them. You know, perhaps there's someone who is A tea totaler. And apparently that was also a problem. Maybe you had. people in the Roman Church of Jewish extraction.

Who are trying to keep Nazarite vows and And they were offended. If anyone drank wine Around them because the drinking of wine. Is specifically mentioned. In verse 21. And so T totaling is not some something that only arose. In the 1800s, it just it came to the table in the 1800s because they figured out a way to T.

Total fruit of the vine. In the cup. But it's not a new thing now. And so we have good instruction here. That if you're teetotaling brother is there you just you don't bring it out you don't enjoy it. You gladly give up what you have would otherwise have had Liberty to enjoy in that circumstance.

in order not to bring sorrow to your brother or to cause him. To stumble. Do not destroy. He says the work of God for the sake of food. And so not only now has Christ died for him verse 15. but also the Lord is working on him and has created him new and is working on him.

And so we must remember who our brother is to the Lord, so that we will look at our interactions as opportunities to love the one whom Christ. Loved to give something up for the one for whom Christ, gave something up. And to participate in the sanctification of someone whom God is working on to sanctify.

Is it not a great opportunity? to give up. Tiny, little bit of cost, and this is righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Sometimes you run into these sophomoric Believers. who think? that freedom to eat and especially to drink and smoke. Whatever they want that, that's really the, the nub of reformed theology, you're really reformed, if you do that stuff, Well, actually maybe a symptom.

Of biblical ethics that you don't call evil. What God created good. But the heart of reformed Christianity is not eating and drinking. It is because reform Christianity is just biblical Christianity. Righteousness, and peace. And, In the Holy. Remember what the Lord Jesus said. That someone who causes one of his little ones.

And in this context, we can make application to that. We could say his weaker ones to stumble. Matthew 18 verse 6 and 7, that it would be better for him to have been cast into the sea. With a millstone around his neck. A fence will come. He says in verse 7 of Matthew 18, but woe to you who become the occasion of the stumbling, or the occasion of the offense.

For your brother. And so, The scripture actually does instruct us here. to conceal from the weaker brother. To hide from his eyes. Our enjoying the Liberty that God has given us. Because we can walk in Liberty at times, and we can even enjoy the Liberty of knowing that.

We could without unrighteousness against God in the eating or drinking, eat the thing, or drink the thing. But that we are in order to walk in righteousness towards God and loving our brother, not eating the thing, you're drinking the thing. So the very fact that I'm free to do it but choosing not to do it for the sake of my brother.

Actually makes it an act of love to my brother. Not to eat the eat, the thing, or drink the thing. And so we enjoy what God has given us to enjoy. When that weaker brother is not around verse 22. Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God.

Don't flaunt it in front of the eyes of your brother in verse 22. And enjoy the fact that you don't condemn yourself, your approving of what God approves and you're enjoying it. But if when your weaker brother is around. You enjoy it in his faith, in his face. And he who doubts eats or drinks.

He's not operating from what he believes. The Bible teaches him, he ought to do. And so, he sends And you wouldn't be walking in love, in that case. And we know that the Commandments are actually summarized By loving God and loving your neighbor, not in mere externals. and so there isn't just the Pharisaic mere externals of piling up rules by the weaker brother.

It's actually pharisaical of. The stronger brother. Not to operate from love towards his brother. That too is a majoring in externals, rather than The conditioning of the heart towards God. So, may God give us. Not just in the church welcoming and especially if the Lord gives you to That be an elder or even in conversation with patients and teaching trying to convince from the Bible, the weaker brother welcoming him as equal in Christ and equally, a member of the church and equally valuable in God's work, and one another's lives.

Not despising him. may God give us to match to that corporate life. Also the the private interaction. With our weaker Brothers, to enjoy not exercising. Our Liberty. Because then is the opportunity to really exercise our love. Let's ask. Lord to bless his words to us unto that end.

Our gracious. God and our heavenly Father, we thank you for this passage and how clearly and plainly it teaches us. We pray that you would help us with those who are weaker. Brothers, of course, immediately come to mind. When we? Read this passage and we think about application help us Lord.

to love them to desire that they would be instructed and have the same Liberty. By your liberating, their conscience from the scripture, We thank you for what you have done for us wherever we Lord. And are weaker Brethren. Whose consciences might be liberated by. A fuller understanding of your word, we ask that you would give that and that you would keep us from being Judgmental.

towards any who perhaps are stronger than we help us, Lord above all to walk in love. As you have loved us and Christ gave himself for us. Make us willing to sacrifice for our brothers and as you are loving us and have created us new and are working on us.

Made us a work of God. Grant that we would enjoy the fellowship with you of being used by you. In our brother's lives. We ask all these things in Jesus name. Amen.