

July 14, 2019 19053-A #41
Romans 14:13-23
Loving Liberty

I. **Matt.9:14-18. Wineskins...**

A. The Bridegroom metaphor means that Jesus is Messiah.

1. He is once again taking authority over religious traditions.

B. The Gospel and the NC are the new wine.

1. The new life of the Spirit, that which the Law could not give.

2. The radical, sovereign, universal, personal saving Lordship of Jesus Christ.

C. Judaism, and the OC are the old wineskin. (fasting = Judaism's piety practices)

1. The Law was not destroyed, but the piety practices were changed.

2. The Pharisaic tradition of fasting regularly (two daylight fasts per week) was picked up by John's disciples because they were still "Old Covenant" believers until they became disciples of Christ.

D. So, when "Old Wineskin" people came to Christ, they felt torn from their old piety practices. It stretched them to the breaking point. Acts 10

E. The Gospel is more powerful than we are, and more powerful than human traditions/structures

II. **The Wineskin problem was THE internal crisis of the early Church (Galatians; Acts 15). Two Forms:**

A. **One was Heresy: deadly to the gospel and condemned by the apostles. Galatians, Acts 15; Colossians 2; Phil.3**

1. The heresy was adding Jewish works (or any works) to the gospel in order to produce salvation.

2. This included dietary and holy day stipulations, but was primarily **grounded in circumcision**—the covenant mark of the Mosaic Law.

3. Paul calls legalism a false gospel, cursed of God. Gal.1:1-10

4. *Christianity is not just warmed-over or nuanced or "improved" Judaism.*

B. **The other was Divisiveness: endangering the love and unity of the church. Read Rom.14:1-23**

1. Christians were judging and disdaining one another based on food and worship days

a) Kosher eating (unclean foods)

b) Sabbath laws and holy days

C. **The Gospel is the cure for both of these problems.**

1. It destroys the heresy and it transforms the divisiveness. **Rom.12:1-2**

III. **On Divisiveness: Two groups had hardened around personal convictions.**

A. The weak in faith were those unable to let go of Jewish food and day laws.

1. They **judged** those who did not keep these mosaic traditions.

B. The strong in faith were unbothered by Jewish scruples.

1. They **disdained** those with the convictions

IV. Paul's instruction is basically clear and simple to both groups. 14:1-23.

A. Because we all love the Lord...Do not nitpick each other. 1-12.

1. Paul's main concern is the judgmental and disdainful attitudes that they had toward each other—not the foods or holy days per se.

- a) *How we treat each other is more important to the Spirit than what we are arguing about.*
- b) *The anger and bad treatment of each other was much worse than the actual issues they were arguing over.*

2. These were all who wanted to honor the Lord. Neither group was in heresy or unrepentant sin.

- a) Adiaaphora is “stuff that doesn't matter.”
 - (1) Some things Christians have created micro-ethical rules about:
 - (2) Food and Drink; worship days and rules about them, Money; Clothing; Card playing; Cosmetics, Jewelry, Hairstyles; Dancing; Mixed swimming; Movies, Stage, Music, Art.
- b) Heresy: Grace + Works = justification. Gal.1:1-10 (Rom.3:28)
- c) Unrepentant Sin is something that God has told us is always wrong. (**Gal. 5:19-21**)

B. Because we will each answer to the Lord...help each other think like Jesus. 13-23.

1. Put the other person's walk with God over your own agenda. 13-21

- a) Remove obstacles to other's spiritual growth.
- b) If ever in doubt, err on the side of love for the other.

2. Develop a mature liberty of your own before God. 22

- a) The goal is strength, but not coercion against conscience.
 - (1) Paul does not envision a situation where the “lowest common denominator” is the ideal model of fellowship. He wants the weak to get strong, not the other way around.
- b) Yet his counsel to the strong is to bear with the weaknesses of those without strength.

3. Do everything from within the reality of Grace/Faith in your own walk with the Lord. 23

- a) Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin = anything that does not grow out of the sense of grace through faith in Jesus and loyalty to him as Lord and Savior is missing the mark.

V. Wise Christians make the following distinctions:

- A. The difference between serious and non-serious issues.
 - 1. Knowing the essence of the gospel.
 - 2. Knowing the moral realities of the Law of Christ.
 - 3. Ignoring a lot of things that are not mentioned in the Bible and do not impinge on either of the above.
- B. The difference between public and private life. 22
 - 1. This is about what is visible to others, especially at the agape feast/communion (1 Cor 8:7-13)
 - 2. Paul ate Gentile Style with Gentiles, Kosher with Jews, both with both. (1 Cor.9:19-23)
- C. The difference between a legalist and a weak brother.
 - 1. A weak brother is actually in danger of turning back to Judaism and rejecting Christ. 15
 - a) Stopping trusting Jesus personally for salvation—this ruins people. They can't decide between food and Jesus, so they get sucked back into legalism and stop trusting Jesus.
 - b) Doing something he believes is a sin for him.
 - 2. A legalist or a rigid person is simply upset with you, judging you for something you do.
- D. The difference between bothering somebody and stumbling them.
 - 1. Bothering is a matter of personal upset or scruple.
 - 2. Stumbling is a matter of driving a person into faithlessness, apostasy or sin, or deeply grieving their conscience such that they despair of forgiveness and restoration.

VI. Pastoral advice on how to cooperate with the Spirit's transformation in this context.

- A. **Humility:** Do not insist on being admired. 1 Cor. 4:1-5
 - 1. *Underneath judgmentalism and disdain is a deep desire to be known to be "right" and "admired" for our spirituality.*
 - 2. We need to give others permission to think what they want about us, otherwise we become prickly, sensitive, contributing to disunity.
- B. **Durability:** Be hard to stumble.
 - 1. *Do not let other people's behavior affect your discipleship.*
 - 2. Does this thing I'm upset about really threaten my faith? Really tempt me to sin?
 - 3. If I have a genuine conviction, I'll keep it intact without judging those who don't share it.
- C. **Clarity:** Focus on the mission and not the misdemeanors.
 - 1. The mission is to bring people to Christ and do everything we can to help them, and each other, grow in Grace.
 - 2. *What is the mission? Helping each other think like Jesus—discipleship and apprenticeship to Christ. Do everything with the mission in mind, the gospel and its impact here and around the world.*
- D. **Patience:** Let people grow at their own pace.
 - 1. Forcing the weak to violate their conscience will cripple them.
 - 2. Intimidating the strong to deny their legitimate freedoms causes undo friction.