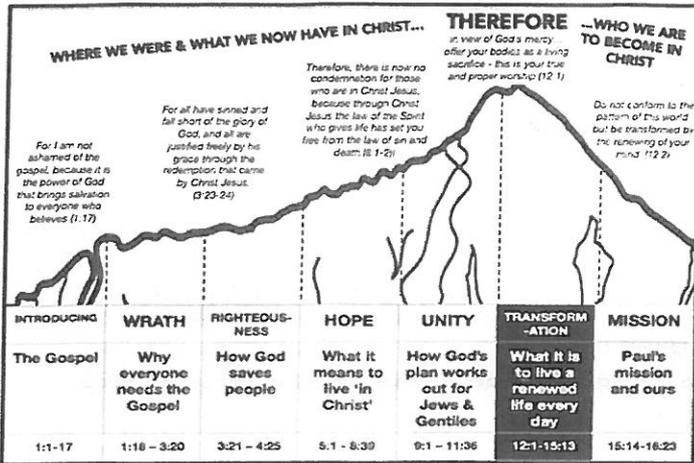


Romans Part 14: Don't sweat the small stuff



Romans 14:1 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 judgement on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. 4 Who are you to pass judgement on the servant of another? It is before his own master[a] that he stands or falls.

1. The error of the “weaker” believer (v. 1-12)

Taking offence at the actions of others.

- Why does Paul call them weaker believers?
- In which areas are we “weaker”?

Weaker believers are those that have not thought about the full implications of the gospel in terms of what can and can't be done.

v. 5: “Everyone should be fully convinced in their own mind.”



2. The error of the “stronger” believer (v. 13-23)

We taking offence at the weaker believer for their offence against us. We tend to patronise or look down on those with scruples as being legalistic.

Paul values unity:

v. 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.”

- Keep relationship
- Don't start needless arguments
- Refrain from our freedoms where appropriate to prevent those who are “weaker” from stumbling
- Seek God through the Scripture to see whether we are right or not

v. 5: “Everyone should be fully convinced in their own mind.”



3. Identifying “matters of conscience”

These are issues that God has not clearly forbidden, nor clearly commanded.



“We must guard against thinking that almost every area is a disputable matter of conscience, and against the view that hardly any area is a disputable matter of conscience.” - Tim Keller

We must seek the Holy Spirit and review the bible to determine whether we are allowed to “agree to disagree” just as we seek him about our opinion about an area.

v. 4: “Who are you to pass judgement on the servant of another? It is before his own master[a] that he stands or falls.”

4. A place for the excluded

Jesus came for people who were excluded by religious practices of the day. Paul write to prevent those practices from being continued unnecessarily.

Let's not let our religious practices exclude people.

Questions:

- Which issues are divisive in our community?
- Think of an issue where you tend to being a “weaker” (scrupulous) believer? How does this chapter challenge and change you?
- Think of an issue where you tend to the “stronger” side. Is your priority enjoying freedom or giving it up to serve a “weaker” believer.
- Who is missing from our community through our actions, practices, programmes, or the words we use? How can we make amends?