



Romans 14:13-23

# LIVING IN LOVE

*Although it is not always easy to distinguish between essentials and non-essentials, a safe guide is that truths on which Scripture speaks with a clear voice are essentials, whereas whenever equally biblical Christians, equally anxious to understand and obey Scripture, reach different conclusions, these must be regarded as non-essentials. ...A church ought to hold the fundamentals of the faith, and at the same time allow for differences of opinion and of interpretation in secondary matters, especially rites and ceremonies. In fundamentals, then, faith is primary, and we may not appeal to love as an excuse to deny essential faith. In non-fundamentals, however, love is primary, and we may not appeal to zeal for the faith as an excuse for failures in love. Faith instructs our own conscience; love respects the conscience of others. Faith gives liberty; love limits its exercise. No one has put it better than Rupert Meldenius [a Lutheran theologian, 1582-1651]: **In essentials unity; in non-essentials liberty; in all things charity.***

—John R. W. Stott

In Romans 14, Paul finally confronts the one issue that was probably creating the most tension in the Roman church—how in the world can Jewish and Gentile Christians get along with each other when they have such different backgrounds, opinions, and convictions on how to live the Christian life?

Though it would have been easier for Jewish and Gentile believers to separate from each other, the whole theology of Romans 1-13 was to give them the basis for remaining united together and learning how to love each other.

Jewish believers, who had a weakness in their faith when it came to dietary laws and special days, were not to judge Gentile believers who did not hold these same convictions (14:4-12). On the other hand, Gentile believers were not to disregard their Jewish brothers and sisters in Christ and put their own strengths and liberties above love (14:13-23).

## FIVE PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES FOR LOVING ONE ANOTHER:

1. **Instead of judging your brother, \_\_\_\_\_ how you are impacting and treating your brother (14:13).**

When we are \_\_\_\_\_-minded, we focus on the faults of others.

When we are \_\_\_\_\_-minded, we focus on how our words and actions are impacting others (cf. 1 Cor. 8:9; Gal. 5:13).

*The weak in faith are not necessarily lesser Christians than the strong. They are simply those who do not think their faith allows them to do certain things that the strong feel free to do.*

—Douglas J. Moo

*A suggested core for Paul's theology may be stated in the following way: God's eternal desire to redeem all peoples through faith in Jesus Christ is now made known through Jews and Gentiles united as one in His church under the Son's universal lordship.*

—Walter B. Russell III

Paul uses the Greek, *ethnos*, "Gentiles, nations," 29x in Romans, more than all of his other epistles combined.

**Hindrance.** Greek, *skandalon*, "the trigger of a trap; a snare"

*Let us therefore stop turning critical eyes on one another. If we must be critical, let us be critical of our own conduct and see that we do nothing to make a brother stumble or fall.*

—J.B. Phillips

*The greatest of faults, I should say, is to be conscious of none.*

—Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881)

**2. Know your theology in order to grow in your love (14:14-16).**

Jesus declared all foods \_\_\_\_\_ (Mark 7:18-23).

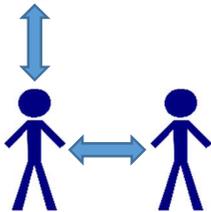
In Christ, we recognize that the *earth is the Lord's and all its fullness* (Ps. 24:1; 1 Cor. 10:26). No food, or material object for that matter, is evil in itself but it can become evil in how it is used.

Thus, a good thing for us can be regarded as evil if it causes a brother to be grieved in his spirit, to fall into sin, and to suffer spiritual ruin.

To put our rights above others is the very antithesis of \_\_\_\_\_.

**3. Be \_\_\_\_\_-minded and always keep the main thing the main thing (14:17-18).**

**GOD**



The kingdom of God is...

This kind of life is pleasing to God and makes an impact on others.

**4. Pursue \_\_\_\_\_ and focus on building up others (14:19-21).**

The work of God is to be displayed in our \_\_\_\_\_.

We are to study others so well that we know what can potentially harm them and what can help them grow (cf. Hebrews 10:24).

**5. Enjoy the good things of life but keep an eye on your faith, heed your conscience, and always walk in love (14:22-23).**

God has given us all things richly to enjoy so enjoy (1 Tim. 6:17)! But if something creates doubt in your mind, bothers your conscience, harms your body, or could cause others to stumble, then don't do it (cf. 1 Cor. 6:12; 10:23-24).

If faith is not the motive for a particular action, then that means we are not doing it for the glory of God but out of fear or selfishness.

All the Mosaic Law is fulfilled in Jesus. He is the final sacrifice. He is our Sabbath rest. He fulfills all the feasts. He displays all the moral law. And He is the One who can make the unclean clean (cf. Mark 1:40-42; Acts 10:9-28).

**Destroy.** Greek, *apollumi*, "to destroy, to render useless." It can convey spiritual destruction or the ruin by which something can no longer serve the purpose for which it was designed.

*When one person sees another doing what his own conscience condemns, it grieves him or causes him pain. When he then proceeds to do what his conscience condemns, he commits sin and ultimately experiences moral destruction.*

—Thomas Constable

*The "weaker" brother is not someone who simply objects to a certain practice, but one who is in danger of falling into sin.*

—gotquestions.org

*The "work of God" could mean the individual weaker brother, but in the context it seems to refer to the Christian community. ...Surely for the sake of a plate of meat we are not going to wreck God's work!* —John R. W. Stott

*The apostle is condemning conduct that springs from motives like selfishness or greed or fear.*

—Leon Morris

*If a Christian does anything when he has doubts in his own mind as to whether it is right or wrong before God...his action does not spring from his faith or trust in God and is therefore wrong...*

*The principle is, "When in doubt, don't."* —John A. Witmer