

Love Your Brother

Romans 14:13-23

9/ 04/ 05

Intro

These last chapters in Romans flow out of the admonition from Paul that we should be transformed by the renewing of our minds. In other words, we should have Christ's thoughts in us and we will be transformed to be like Him.

These verses teach us about how to love our brother or sister in Christ. Paul wants to see the church be mature and healthy in every way and how we relate to each other will have a great impact on what the world thinks of Christ.

Paul here is not giving us the details of every answer we may face in our lives, but he does give us the principles we need to understand to know how to be mature in Christ.

These are the principles of loving each other in the church and having the maturity of Christ.

I. Love by Not Judging

A. Don't make others feel inferior

- Judging goes both ways.
- It is easy to judge those who have a lot of restrictions in their lives --- and those who don't.

Romans 12:3, "For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith."

- Legalism can be a real problem – thinking that by the keeping of restrictions we are made more acceptable to God.

Illus – Paul confronted Peter over his treatment of others in the city of Antioch regarding the Gentile believers. Peter had already been told by the Lord, "Don't call unclean what I have called clean."

- Paul, in several places, also wrote that it is the Holy Spirit working in people's lives that causes them to grow in the Lord in regards to the rules for life.

Illus – My music transition was step by step.

II Corinthians 3:18, "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit."

B. Don't cause others to stumble

- It's important to remember the context. Paul said that he was writing to those who knew the law.
- They lived in a society that put many restrictions on how to get God's approval.

Illus – We knew of a family that raised their kids with an incredible amount of restrictions, and when one of them went out on his own, some extended family decided to expose him to the real world – not a good idea.

- One of the issues they would have to deal with was the issue of meat sacrificed to idols. Such meat

would have a special price at the market, but many were offended.

- Paul wrote that he is free in regard to this meat, but of someone says, **“That was sacrificed to an idol,”** don’t eat it.

I Corinthians 10:31-33, “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of the many, so that they may be saved.”

C. Judge yourself first

- A dose of humility is good for the soul.
- If we could see that we still have a lot of room to grow, then we would be much more patient with others.

Luke 16:15, And He said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God.”

Proverbs 21:2, “Every man's way is right in his own eyes, But the Lord weighs the hearts.”

II. Walk According to Love

A. Yield your rights

- Verse 14 – Paul says that he knows in the Lord that nothing is unclean of itself.

- Paul has a lot of freedom in Christ. He is free to eat meat sacrificed to idols; he is free to eat pork...
- But he is very willing to give up those rights for the sake of those around him who are still struggling with these issues.

Illus – I read of true story of a church that had a conflict over whether they should have a Christmas tree in the sanctuary. It got to the point of fisticuffs and tug-of-war as one group would drag it out and then the other would drag it back in. One group sued the next and eventually went to court. Of course the whole town followed in the papers...

I Corinthians 3:3, “for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?”

B. The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy

- Righteousness -- Because we are made acceptable to God by keeping of laws, we are made righteous by God Himself who gave to us the righteousness of Christ as a gift.
- Peace -- Because this is given to us in Christ, “My peace I give to you.” There is a calm confidence in Christ that is unflappable and undisturbed in irritations of the moment.
- Joy -- Because joy comes from a delight in life that finds life worthwhile. Joy comes, not because of circumstances, but because of who we are in Christ. Don’t lose you joy over irritations in life.

Galatians 5:25-26, “If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.”

Philippians 4:5-6, “Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near.”

C. Be acceptable to God and approved by men

- Paul says that God is pleased with a heart that is considerate of other people and not contentious.
- Paul also says that he who serves Christ in this way will be approved by men. In other words, there is something very desirable in people who peacemakers, who are willing to yield their rights in deference to those who genuinely struggle with an issue.

II Corinthians 4:2, “but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.”

Illus – When I was going to bible college, I had made an agreement with the registrar's office about how to handle a Greek class; and they reneged...

III. Be a Blessing

A. Pursue the things which make for peace

- The word “pursue” means just that, we should pursue the things which make for peace with all diligence.

Romans 12:17-18, “Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.”

- By implication, it also means that we should not pursue the things which make for contention.

Illus – I remember a guy who made much of his maturity in Christ and how well he lived for Him, but then wrote me a letter because he was “offended” because one of our leaders had a wine rack in their house.

- Don't use, “I'm offended” as a way of getting others to do what you want. Be more mature than that.

B. Build up one another

- The other thing to pursue, Paul writes, is the building up of one another.
- In other words, seek for ways to bless other people, to build them up.

Romans 15:1-2, “Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves. Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification.”

Ephesians 4:29, “Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.”

C. Don't be easily offended

- Out of our maturity in Christ, we desire to yield our rights so as not to offend others.
- But there is also an important point that we need to grow in our maturity in Christ so that we are not easily offended.
- Verse 22, Paul says that the faith we have, have as our own conviction before God.
- In other words, don't try to lay your convictions on everyone else around you as a point of condemnation.

Illus – There are so many ways we can do this: Christmas, Halloween, Easter, music, TV, drinking, eating healthy, etc...

- But whatever you do, do out of your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

When the church loves each other in these ways, it becomes a wonderful place of joy, of peace, and of edification. Then the world will know that we are truly reflecting Christ in what we do.