

Journey Through the New Testament

Romans 13-16, I Corinthians 1

Series: Deep Thoughts with Paul

“Don’t Tear it Down, Build it Up!”

7-7-19

Introduction

Today’s lesson from Romans 14 calls us to focus on faith, the kingdom of God, and what is best for the whole community. The Jewish and Gentile believers had come into disagreement regarding food and drink. The differing opinions had resulted in judgment of each other. Paul was adamant that the essentials of the kingdom should not be compromised by arguments over lesser things. The welfare of the whole community of believers was more important than varying convictions. Judging and tearing each other down was not acceptable. Paul’s instruction was clear and timeless, “strive for the things that bring peace and the things that build each other up.” (Romans 14:19)

Opening Discussion

1. Think of heated discussions that you have observed or have been part of...religion, politics, etc. Why is it so difficult to have passionate convictions without judging others?
2. How does our sense of “right” and “wrong” come into play when controversy arises in the church?

Prayer

O God, we confess that we love to be right. We categorize, criticize, and judge our brothers and sisters whose views are different than our own. Remind us, that you alone are the judge. Strengthen us so that we are able to build each other up and to seek peace. In Christ we pray. Amen.

Bible Study Romans 14:4, 17-23 (CEB)

Lesson Notes: The traditions of the Jewish believers involved dietary restriction. The Gentiles had no issues with any foods and Paul was clear that “all things were clean” which had been revealed to him in a vision. (Acts chapters 10,11) The use of weak/strong in some translations refers to faith. The strong who believed in eating anything despised the weak for their lack of freedom. The weak condemned the strong for what they judged to be misuse of freedom. The real problem wasn’t the food, but the judgements that were tearing the community apart.

What?

1. Think of times that you have judged others. Why is it so very easy to immediately judge someone else? To tear each other down?
2. What is characteristic of God's kingdom? (v. 17)
3. Since we belong to the kingdom of God, how are we to behave? (v. 19)
4. God's grace was made available to all people through Christ but the differing groups of the early church did not share the same sense of freedom. Using verse 20, fill in the blank for the church in our time.
Don't destroy what God has done because of _____.

So What?

1. In what way does seeking peace and building each other up produce harmony and growth for the whole community?
2. Each of us as believers has a unique history, unique faith development, and we are at varying ages and stages of life. How can this perspective help us build each other up?

Now What?

1. Last week's lesson from Romans 12 outlined what it means to be wholly devoted to God and spiritually transformed. How does this apply to today's text and our call to stop tearing each other down?
2. What can you do to foster peace and acceptance when you are involved in a heated faith debate?
3. How are we empowered to carry out this kind of kingdom living? (v. 4)

Holiness of Heart and Life

...loving one another is a never-ending Christian obligation. It is also the essence of Christian ethics and behavior. When we avoid violating a particular law, the letter of the law is observed. But when we love another, the underlying spirit of the law is fulfilled. John 14:15: If you love me you will keep my commandments. – Jesus links loving him to keeping his commandments, so that love is the only law in our relationships. To practice love means promoting the highest good of others and not causing harm. (Commentary, Wesley Study Bible)