

Bible Study
Romans 14-15:7 (2)

Study Romans 14:17-15:7

1. In verse 17, the word 'righteousness' has the meaning of virtue or integrity; the faithful discharge of all the duties we owe to God and our neighbor. That should be our main focus. "Peace" refers not to the inward peace but the peace of relationships with others. "Joy" relates to the personal happiness produced in the mind of believers by the Gospel and each other.
 - a. Would a paraphrase of vs. 17 be something like, "Don't get tied up with all the distinctions that don't really matter but focus on the real heart of salvation: righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost?"
2. Collect a few other NT passages that state that the tendency of the Gospel in practice will promote peace.
3. How does verse 18 tie in to verse 17?
4. Vs. 19-20a is the Holy Spirit's direction to God's saints to lay aside all those things that would contribute to disharmony and promote peace. With regard to our own church family, what would particular 'virtues' would contribute to deeper peace among us and greater joy within us?
5. Albert Barnes wrote, "There are great common objects before all Christians in which they can unite, and in the pursuit of which they will cultivate a spirit of peace. Let them all strive for holiness; let them seek to spread the gospel; let them engage in circulating the Bible, or in doing good in any way to others. The result will be that their smaller matters of difference will sink into comparative unimportance, and they will unite in one grand purpose of saving the world. Christians have more things in which they agree than in which they differ. The points on which they are agreed are of infinite importance. The points on which they differ are commonly some minor matters in which they may "agree to differ," and still cherish love for all who bear the image of Christ."

What are your reflections on this counsel? Is this in line with the Spirit's intent of this chapter?

6. In vs. 20b the apostle concedes that the Levitical regulations of the food were no more binding. How far does that apply to traditions we may hold nearly as 'sacred'? How do determine whether our conscience is influenced by our upbringing and not necessarily shaped by God's Word?
7. In vs. 20b we read 'it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.' The verse is explained further in vs. 21.
 - a. Is the 'evil' referred to a sin?

- b. Does the 'offense of this evil' apply to our own conscience or the conscience of a brother/sister? If to your own, what should you do? If to a brother/sister, what should you do?
8. Vs. 21 is quite comprehensive: *don't eat, drink or do anything that might cause your brother to sin (stumble), or be offended, or made weak.*
- a. How would we lead a brother 'to sin' if the matter we do is not sinful?
 - b. How would a brother or sister be made weak?
 - c. God here places the chief responsibility for peace on the strong in faith. They are to deny themselves for the weak. Yet some argue that this would only enable the weak to dominate the agenda as everyone needs to bow to their view. How do we handle this objection?
9. Vs. 22a directs the strong to exercise their liberty in private where only God's eyes see you. So if a brother or sister in Christ feels a certain clothing style (modest shorts or pants), or drinking a moderate amount of alcohol, or eating meat, or smoking, is not a sin, should they be rebuked when they do these things in the privacy of their life at home or on holiday away from their fellow believers who might feel offended?
10. Vs. 22b confirms that blessedness only comes when one refrains from using our liberty in public as it would only bring disharmony in the body. How would you use this verse to encourage a brother who feels annoyed or irritated that he always has to be the one to deny himself for the sake of not offending the weak in faith?
11. How would a person be 'damned' when he does something that actually violated his conscience? Will he be condemned to hell forever for violating his conscience?
12. Obviously some consciences can be 'misinformed', and a saint of God may experience 'false guilt.' For example, some consciences are 'taught' to believe that sipping a drop of alcohol is sin. Others sense a violation of their conscience to step into a car on Lord's Day, even if they use it to go to church. How would you deal with such a brother or sister?