



New Covenant

Presbyterian Church

Romans 14 Small Group Questions and Answers

1. How does Romans 14:1-23 fit into the larger context of Romans 12-16 (i.e. in the applicatory section)?

Paul is continuing on with his discussion about the role of love in the Christian life. As he had applied it to individuals, toward the church, toward the world and in the civil realm, he now applies it to a potential division in the church over secondary matters.

2. How many groups are mentioned in Romans 14. Who are they?

At least 2--the strong and the weak. Probably a division of Jewish and Gentile believers. Calvin writes: "the Churches were formed of both Jews and Gentiles; some of whom, having been long accustomed to the rites of the Mosaic law, having been brought up in them from childhood, were not easily drawn away from them; and there were others who, having never learnt such things, refused a yoke to which they had not been accustomed."

3. Who are the strong and who are the weak?

The strong are those who understand their Christian liberty, namely, that there are no foods and no drink that is, in itself, unclean. The weak are those who believe that there are certain foods and certain drink that they are to avoid.

4. What is the division in the church over?

The weak believed that they were the stronger and more mature brothers in the church. They were judging the stronger brother for his eating and drinking (v. 3). The stronger brothers (among whom Paul considered himself a part) were despising the weaker brother for not having a biblically informed conscience regarding their freedom to eat and drink anything. Strong consciences are not necessarily biblically informed consciences. That's the problem that Paul is addressing. Those with strong consciences that have not been biblically informed consciences are actually weak brothers.

5. How does the Gospel affect the problem?

Paul takes the idea of the two groups judging each other and reminds them that God alone is judge and that all men will stand before him on judgment day. Additionally, he reminds them that God made His people to stand. Then Paul says that Jesus died and rose again to be the Lord of the living and the dead. When we take our eyes off of Christ, who alone is Lord of the conscience, then we will inevitably start to judge others. When we remember that Jesus is our redeemer and the only one who can judge we will not judge our brother in matters of conscience. We will not try to put ourselves in the place of God.

6. What does Paul urge the "brothers" as a solution to their problem.

That they are to love each other. He specifically calls the strong to bear with the weak and not put a stumbling block in his way.

7. How could a stronger brother make a weaker brother stumble?

If the stronger brother tried to urge the weaker brother to eat certain foods or to drink certain drinks which the weaker brother did not believe he had the freedom to eat or drink then he would be causing the weaker brother to sin against his own conscience.



New Covenant

Presbyterian Church

8. Why must we insist that Paul was not telling the stronger brothers never to eat certain foods or drink alcohol lest we cause a weaker brother to stumble?

Paul is only telling the churches that the stronger brothers should not attempt to get a weaker brother to do something about which his or her conscience has not been biblically informed about being free to do. If Paul is saying that the stronger brother should never eat or drink publically, then we would turn the weaker brother into the stronger brother and the stronger brother into the weaker brother. Paul is actually instructing the weaker brethren about their freedom while calling the strong to bear with them in love. We need to help people along patiently and lovingly.

8. What is the most important principle in Romans 14?

“The Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” This is what all of the brothers--weak or strong--should be focused on. This comes from setting our eyes on Jesus, who died and rose to be the Lord of the living and the dead.