

Bible Study Romans 14:1-23

1. “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.” Apostle Paul (Gal 5:1) “I’m free to do what I want any old time” Mick Jagger and Keith Richards (Rolling Stones).

What are some different ways people think of “freedom”?

Eg’s Total libertarianism; release from prison; no political restraints on speech, religion, gathering etc; release from slavery to self and a new power to serve others though the work of Christ and his Spirit in us.

2. **Read Rom 14.** This chapter deals with one main thing. How would you sum it up in one or two sentences?

NB: If no one can suggest anything, come back to this question later.

Something like: Christians won’t agree on everything, but what unites us (God’s work through the gospel) should energise us to live together and build one another up despite our different opinions on various things.

3. Does “weak faith” (v.1-2) suggest that that person might not be saved? What does this phrase mean?

Read v.4 – God has accepted them, so they are saved. But in a certain area, in this case, eating meat, they do not feel free, they feel their faith would be threatened or eating meat troubles their conscience. The implications of the gospel – that in Christ all things are ours (1 Cor 3:21) and all food is clean (v.14; Mk 7:17-23) have not fully liberated their conscience. So their faith is “weak” but it is still saving faith.

4. Paul says that it is alright for a person’s conscience to ‘restrict’ their freedom in Christ. What is it that he is against? Why?

The ‘strong’ must not look down on the weak and the weak must not condemn the strong (vv.3, 10), nor must the ‘strong’ ignore the consciences of the weak and so cause them to stumble in their faith (vv.13-16). Our unity in Christ is God’s wonderful work in the gospel, but when we stand on our own opinions about disputable things, we cause divisions and trample on other people’s consciences, ‘destroying God’s work’ (v.20).

5. What does verse 5 say about ‘disputable matters’? What are the implications for us when we differ on something that’s not plainly given in the Bible?

We’re free to hold that conviction and we can keep it to ourselves – we neither need to impose our opinion on others, or seek to ‘correct’ those who have a conviction we think is unnecessary.

6. Do vv.5-8 & 22 suggest that Christians should just keep to themselves and not worry about other Christians? Cf vv.15-21.

*No – this is referring to one’s conscience over disputable things. We are to keep that between God and us **so that** we can engage well with others, especially those we differ from.*

7. Why do ‘disputable matters’ so often cause troubles in the church? What is the way forward?

We so often treat them as more important than they are. We either demand others agree with us or we act in a way that shows we don’t care that others disagree, and so disputable thing becomes more important than the undisputable things – that we are one in Christ, justified by his sacrifice, reconciled to God and set free to rejoice in his Spirit (v.17).

8. Make a list of some of the ‘disputable matters’ that you and other Christians today might have. Work through a few and consider how to apply the principles of this passage – of being fully convinced, of it being for the Lord, of not causing another to stumble over it, or not judging or looking down on others over it. Spend some time praying that we will live as those set free to live in the Kingdom of God (v.17).

Some examples; Dinking alcohol; Smoking; creation vs evolution; infant vs believer baptism; how to take communion; who to vote for; Christian schools; Translations of the Bible; Expressing emotion in church; Raising children; Use of money; Fish or red meat in Lent; Observing the church calendar; ...