



Sermon Growth Guide

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KEEPING THE PEACE | Romans 14:19-23

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Key Verse: Romans 14:19 - "Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification."

Big Idea: Our conduct with others is based upon our faith relationship with God.

Foundations

This section of Romans is the conclusion of the issue of meat offered to idols and human freedom (chapter 14). Verse 14:19 introduces the conclusion with a double particle construction: "Therefore, then . . ." This signals that the argument is coming to the end. The main issue is how we are to exercise freedom in relationship to others in the body of Christ. Is our freedom self-derived, "my freedom," or does freedom have its roots in a faith relationship with God that extends to other people, thus, "our freedom"?

Understanding God's Word

The text is not really about food but exercising freedom in the body of Christ. For Paul, food offered to idols became an issue because believers were being asked to join pagan friends in idol temples to eat. For the stronger believer, knowing that "all things are clean" v. 20, this was not an issue by itself. It only becomes an issue when a weaker believer is harmed by the exercise of freedom. So, the issue is not food but how one exercises freedom within the body of Christ.

Applying God's Word

Where in our culture does the issue of exercising freedom in the body of Christ arise? Maybe some drink alcohol or read secular books or whatever the issue might be. The issue is not the behavior but how this might affect a brother or sister in the faith. When Paul concludes by saying, "Everything that does not come from faith is sin," he is setting the exercise of freedom in the relationship one has with God as it affects others.

Witnessing God's Word

We witness our faith in the way we ask how our freedom either builds up or tears down others in the body of Christ. If it builds up others, then this is good, if it tears down others, this is sin.