



### Kicking Off

Christians often have differences of opinion about how to live. We can believe in the same essentials, what the apostle Paul calls things of 1st importance, which you have to hold to, to be Christian, but have big differences of opinion about things not of 1st importance because of tradition, culture, preference.

What are some examples?

(eg Christians can't have tattoos. Christians must not smoke. Christian men can't have earrings. Dancing is wrong, drums are from the Devil. Drinking is alcohol is wrong)



### Digging Deeper

(Please see the sermon on our website to help you answer these questions)

### **Read Romans 14.1-15.7**

Q In the church in Rome 2 groups were having disputes with each other.

Paul calls them the 'weak' & the 'strong.' Who were they?

(The weak were Jewish Xns who insisted that even as Xns they should keep observing the Jewish special days & diet. So they continued to keep the Jewish Sabbath - not doing any work from sun-down Friday to sundown Saturday, and they refused to eat meat. But the consciences of many Jewish Xns weren't able to accept that they were now liberated from Jewish food laws. They felt like they would be dishonouring God if they ate meat. Paul calls them 'weak in faith'. He is not saying they don't love Jesus or their love for him is weak, but they have a weak or deficient understanding of their freedom in Christ.

The 'strong' were Gentile Christians who hadn't grown up with the Jewish traditions, & didn't get why the Jewish Christians were so hung up on these issues. They understood their freedoms in Christ)

Q Why did the weak judge the strong?

Q Why did the strong treat the weak with contempt?

(The strong looked down their noses at the weak. They said, 'Why do you guys get hung up on this stuff, why do you put restrictions on yourselves? Don't you get we are free in X.' The weak said, 'No you guys don't get it. We are the pure Christians, because we've not abandoned God's traditions. You call yourselves Strong but you're wrong.')

Q Why are we to respect other Christians' consciences over secondary issues?

(Both the weak and the strong are trying to please God. Neither group is disobeying Him. Having said that, a clear conscience is no guarantee you are right. Only the Word of God can tell us what is right. So we ought to be constantly exposing our conscience to the Word of God so that it goes on being educated, either to strengthen it if it has become lax or to release it if it has become over sensitive.

Q How might the strong cause the weak to stumble?

(Even though you are free to eat meat, or drink alcohol, if you insist on exercising your freedom in front of your brother or sister who think they are wrong, you are being unloving. Not only are you doing something right in front of them that they think is wrong, which is bad enough, but you could pressure them into doing what their conscience is telling them not to do, and if they do what they think is wrong, they sin. If something is not wrong, but I believe it is wrong, and I still do it, then it is a sin, because I did it with a rebellious heart. If we go against our conscience we sin. So, the strong should not pressure the weak to do stuff that the weak are convinced they're not allowed to do. To do so would be to cause them to sin).

Q How is Christ to be an example for our conduct (v3,v7)?



Think it through

Q Our responsibility to love is greater than our right to exercise our freedom. Discuss