

Romans 14:13-23

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[0 : 00] For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.

Much is communicated in these 11 verses, and the language is not very simple. We most regularly aid our thinking with simple outlines.

I like to give them to you in advance and give you some structure to know where we're going.

Typically, two to four point outlines. Most regularly three.

Things just seem to fall into that structure. But today, in a way that I hope won't complicate our consideration, we're going to follow the negative exhortations.

That is the do-nots through the text in seven points. So if you are a note-taker and you want to get these in advance, they all start with do-not. So that might help you, save you a little bit of writing time.

[1 : 37] I'm going to give them to you very quickly, and then we'll jump right into the first point. So, number one, do not judge your brother. Number two, do not tempt your brother to sin.

Number three, do not grieve your brother. Number four, do not destroy your brother. Number five, do not forfeit your witness.

Number six, do not destroy the work of God. And number seven, do not flaunt or forfeit your liberty. So hopefully you can kind of pick this up and piece together where we're headed as we go through it.

Now, I just want to say at the outset, before we go to point one, you will note that I said brother in most of those points. Do not judge your brother is point number one.

And it is very reasonable to say, or sister, brother or sister. And to say that many, many, many times this morning. And I want you to know that often the language of just brother is picked up in the Scripture.

[2 : 40] And I don't think that they mean to exclude you ladies who are in Christ. I think that's what the authors are doing at all. But they're helping us to think about us being co-heirs with Christ and being recipients of all that is given to those who belong to him, which would have been men in the Bible, right?

My oldest brothers received the great benefit of the family. And so, ladies, I think you want to find yourself as a brother. So I'm not excluding you as I address in that way this morning.

And neither do I believe as Paul. So, firstly, do not judge your brother. And we see this in the first part of verse 13. Therefore, let us not pass judgment on one another any longer.

Verse 13 begins with this word, therefore. So we must first deal with it to understand what comes next. This transition word.

Because of everything that I've said, this next thing I'm going to say. In the final half of chapter 14, Paul exhorts us to humbly serve one another as it concerns what he calls opinions in verse 1.

[3 : 54] I made the case to you that Paul is not speaking in this chapter of doctrines that are fundamental to the faith. Remember, we talked about theological triage.

First, second, third, and fourth tier issues, right? What I do believe he's speaking about is those issues that we deem third tier theological issues.

Not unimportant convictions, but they should be held in a particular way, which is what he's trying to help us to see here, right?

We may disagree on some of the less important matters. How do we do that? How do we walk in unity together when we don't quite see eye to eye on everything?

He employed two examples in the beginning of the chapter. One about food and the other, the observance of particular days. And he returns to that former example in the last half of the chapter.

[4 : 56] So he's talking largely in chapter 14 about food, and we think, particularly, food that's been offered to idols. So these exhortations are for Christians living in relationship to other Christians under the assumption that they're all laboring to live their lives in a manner that's pleasing to God.

Last week, we noted four foundational reasons that Paul gives us for his call to Christian unity on these types of matters. I touched on them briefly last week.

I'm going to touch on them really briefly this week as well to remind us of them. So in verses 3 and 8 of chapter 14, we see, if you've made a profession of faith in Christ, that we are gods.

Verse 3 says that God has welcomed him, referring to this weaker brother. And then verse 8 says whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.

We belong to him. Secondly, our eternal position is secured by God. Verse 4 says, And he will be upheld, this weak faith Christian, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

[6 : 18] Thirdly, we saw that Paul's examples are heartfelt. And by that I mean, they're well-intentioned. The person who has these particular convictions is doing them because he wants to please God.

Verse 6 says, The one who observes the day observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God.

The intention is pure. I want to please God with my life. And fourth, God will judge our temporal works.

Verse 10 says we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. And verse 12, each of us will give an account of himself to God. And so there's things that will be sorted out in the end.

So it follows all of this that Paul says, Therefore, let us not pass judgment on one another any longer.

[7 : 22] We have to have our categories straight in our heads if we were going to get this not passing judgment correct. So we're going to take a little time at this point, which I think will help us progress more quickly as our text proceeds.

So when you hear, Therefore, let us not pass judgment on another any longer, your mind may, mine does, rush off to a text like Matthew chapter 7 and verse 1.

There Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount, Judge not that you be not judged. In the common Christian zeitgeist, the understanding of this verse and Romans 14, 1 seems so clear and is handled with phrases like, you've likely heard somebody say something like, Well, who am I to judge?

It is used as an instruction for retreat from meaningful engagement in the lives of others in the church. But what does Jesus go on to teach in Matthew chapter 7?

He says, Judge not lest you be judged. For with the judgment you pronounce, you will be judged. And with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. And that should strike some fear in us.

[8 : 41] I'm just going to avoid it altogether then. But then he goes on in verse 3. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?

Or how can you say to your brother, Let me take the speck out of your eye when there is a log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

So in verse 5 of Matthew 7, Jesus tells us that we ought to remove the speck from our brother's eye after warning us how it is that we ought to remove the speck from our brother's eye.

Jesus here in Matthew is a warning against judgmentalism. An arrogance that says, I have figured out all the intricacies of what faithful life looks like.

And this ought not characterize the humble heart. I've got it all sorted, Jesus says. Oh, be careful. There is a log in your eye if you think in this way.

[9 : 47] Be sure that you are of humble heart, that you see your own sin as large, that you might see clearly to help others with theirs.

These verses are not instruction for retreat, for meaningful engagement in the lives of others in the church, but instruction for care and for categories.

How are we to go about loving one another in the truth, pressing one another towards Christlikeness in the midst of disagreement?

Otherwise, if we don't see it this way, what do we do with Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 5, verses 9-13? Is he contradicting himself or the Lord Jesus Christ?

Of course not. There he says, I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people. There was an egregious sin that he had heard was going on in the life of this church, and they were tolerating it.

[10:54] He then says, not at all meaning the sexually immoral in this world or the greedy and swindlers or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler, not even to eat with such a one.

So somebody's life that is characterized by sin, they say they're a Christ follower and their life gives no evidence of that. The fruit that they're producing is not the fruit of a redeemed tree, it's the fruit of a different kind, right?

A desperately lost tree. And then he says, verse 12, for what have I to do with judging outsiders, those of the world? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge?

God judges those outside. Purge the evil person from among you. So, we're not being instructed in Romans chapter 14 to not help people see their sin.

To point out, you're in error here. We want to faithfully follow Jesus and you're wrong. Let me help you see the wrong that exists in your life.

[12:14] One of the important things the church does together is this great work. I am so grateful to be fellowshipped, committed to a group of Christians that help me faithfully follow Jesus.

I need your help to do this. Do not leave me alone in this effort. You are a grace given to me and I hope to one another and me to you.

Jesus gives us instruction on in Matthew, Matthew chapter 18, verse 15 through 17, about how we're to go about this careful speck removal work.

It's a four-step process. He starts in verse 15, if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.

You go to him, he sinned, and he hears you, he repents. Praise God. Step two, but if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.

[13:20] You go with others. You say, brother, we all see this thing that's going on in your life that requires repentance. And it's assumed, right, if he listens to you, you have gained your brother.

There's an opportunity for repentance at that second step. Thirdly, verse 17, if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church.

And again, an opportunity. But if he does listen, right, you have gained your brother. And step four, and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

That is to say, one who is not in the faith. So this is not the judgment that Paul is talking about here. It can't be.

If it is, then the whole thing is just running in contradiction. Paul changed his mind at some point about all of this. And we know that this text is an inspired text. It has ultimately, as its author, God.

[14:20] And God cannot lie. And he cannot contradict himself. So we're to not pass judgment on one another any longer.

And I believe, because of everything that I've said, he's talking about these third-tier types of issues. The Greek verb here translated, past judgment, can also be translated, determine.

And it carries the idea of condemnation. In the second half of verse 13, the word translated decide, in the ESV, is the same Greek verb.

So Paul is saying, right, on these third-tier convictional matters, let's not condemn one another. And he goes on, secondly, do not tempt your brother to sin.

The last half of verse 13 and verse 14, this is point two. He says, instead of that, let us not pass judgment, but rather, decide, determine, never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.

[15:34] Instead of being judgmental, determine that you will not tempt the weaker brother. And this is where he picks back up the food example.

Last week I said that there are two possibilities why an early Roman Christian may have abstained from eating of meat. In either case, it is most probable that they were Jewish.

They may have been strictly vegetarian, either, one, to avoid eating meat that had been offered to an idol, or two, to avoid any meat that was considered unclean under Old Testament law.

Although they probably were aware of those, but I don't, I'm not very good at identifying meat once it's been cut up. So, maybe you or they were better at it.

So I want to say it's probably the former, perhaps maybe a little of the latter, because the concern was this unknowingly eating of meat that had been offered to an idol.

[16:32] And Paul calls these brothers the weaker brothers at the beginning of chapter 14. In today's text, in verse 14, he says, I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean.

So he's being very clear on the doctrinal matter. It is okay to eat these meats, these meats that were considered unclean in the Old Testament, these meats that are offered to idols.

Gentiles. This issue, however, was not a simple issue. Simple for us, not simple for them. In Acts chapter 15, a council is gathered in Jerusalem to determine whether or not Gentiles who converted to Christianity needed to be circumcised.

This issue was at the core of much hubbub in the early church. The book of Galatians is written to address those who were teaching that somebody must be circumcised to be saved.

A salvific question. And this council gathers and we get a record of it in Acts chapter 15 and they determined that circumcision had no bearing on the salvation of one's soul and decided to circulate a letter stating so.

[17:54] But that letter did include some further instruction. So Acts chapter 15, this is verse 28, 29, for it has seemed good, this is the letter they wrote, to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden, talking about circumcision, than these requirements that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what has been strangled and from sexual immorality.

If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. So a letter is circulated from the apostles who were in Jerusalem. Paul participated in this decision making and in the distribution of that letter. Perhaps a little more complicated because in our text today in verse 14, he says, there's nothing unclean. It's quite okay for me to eat meat offered to idols.

And you don't see that in chapter 14 specifically, do you? but you can find it in 1 Corinthians chapter 8. So if you will, turn with me to 1 Corinthians 8.

We're going to read the entirety of the chapter because he lays this argument out. It's really the example that I think is embedded in Romans 14 just walked all the way out.

[19:13] It's like logical reasoning to its end and I think really helpful for us this morning. 1 Corinthians 8 beginning in verse 1.

Now, concerning food offered to idols. Okay, so there's the example very clearly right at the beginning. We know that all of us possess knowledge.

This knowledge puffs up but love builds up. The knowledge he's referring to that it's okay to eat food offered to idols. If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know.

But if anyone loves God, he is known by God. Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that an idol has no real existence and that there is no God but one.

For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist and one Lord Jesus Christ through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

[20:23] He's basically saying food that's offered to idols doesn't mean anything because there are no other gods. Like, vain worship. Right? That's what he's saying there. However, not all possess this knowledge but some through former association with idols eat food as really offered to an idol and their conscience being weak is defiled.

One who used to offer food to idols. Right? Food will not commend us to God. Verse 8, we are no worse off if we do not eat and no better off if we do.

How are we justified? By faith alone. Right? Justified by faith alone, not by our works. But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.

For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will he not be encouraged if his conscience is weak to eat food offered to idols?

And so by your knowledge this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. Thus, sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ.

[21 : 34] Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat lest I make my brother stumble. So the whole matter seems to be one that was important as a way of separating Christians from idolaters, but not as an issue of salvation.

Acts chapter 15, we want to be clear about who we are. We are not idolaters. However, the practice had grown and wasn't seen as salvific in any way.

An example with some fair parallel in our day, especially in the southeast, is that of the consumption of alcohol. The Bible gives no prohibitions against alcohol in moderation.

It does issue warning against the use of strong drink and it does forbid drunkenness. You are young people meant to obey the laws of our land, drinking.

If you are younger than 21, it is not even a debate for you. It does not forbid moderate drinking.

However, this activity is wrought with complications when you add the addictive nature of alcohol and its great abuse.

[22 : 51] I think all of us have been affected in one way or another by alcohol abuse. It has probably touched all of our lives. and the cultural assumptions that come along with it about those who drink.

A great old joke asked, do you know the difference between a Baptist and a Methodist? Of course, there are a lot of theological differences, but the joke is the Baptist is the one who ducks when you walk in the liquor store.

It is not a simple issue. It is not a simple issue. What are the Bible's prohibitions? We need to be clear about this. It parallels in a lot of ways.

It is not a thing we should do without careful thought towards others. I am going to make it a simple issue. For all of our years of involvement with the Georgia Baptist Convention, there was a period of time where I went to annual meetings and without fail, there would be a motion from the floor to make it essentially an unforgivable sin that any pastor in the Georgia Baptist Convention drink alcohol.

It would get hotly debated on the floor. It was very silly to be frank because one group was just going, but the prohibition is not clear in the text.

[24 : 16] Make the prohibition clear and we are with you, but until you can make the prohibition clear and it becomes a problem in that way. But we're being encouraged here in this text to not put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.

Your participation in something that you are free to participate in, that has the potential to harm your brother is no longer of any value.

And Paul takes it a step further in 1 Corinthians 8 and calls it sin. You are sinning against the one who Christ died for. And he says in verse 11, the brother for whom, excuse me, verse 12, you sin against Christ.

So we have to be considerate about the things that we do, the liberties that we practice, the ways in which we disagree on these third-tier issues. It matters greatly.

We'll see why in just a bit. The next exhortation, negative exhortation, verse 15a, the first part of verse 15, point number three.

[25 : 31] For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. This word grieved can also be translated pained, distressed,!

or hurt. I am continually astounded by those that consider themselves quote-unquote strong. They consider themselves strong in faith, who deal with those who are weak in faith in unloving ways.

This kind of arrogance. I've got it figured out. How could you not see this? If you desire for everyone who claims to follow Christ to look like you, then you are not mature.

You are not strong in faith. You are rather pharisaical. people. It's a great expression of immaturity to walk unlovingly in these types of matters.

You probably all know someone who does this. He's got a lot of knowledge and it is way outpacing their maturity. It's really damaging to have knowledge without love.

[26 : 44] Jesus issues all of these woes in the book of Matthew 22. And this one is particularly striking to me. Matthew chapter 23 in verse 15. He says, Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites.

So these are the religious people of his day. For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte or convert. And when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.

Now, Jesus is speaking to unconverted people who further condemn others. But should we be characterized in the same way? Absolutely not. May it never be.

The strong in faith, truly strong in faith, hold fast to the gospel of Jesus Christ. They know that they are saved from the wrath of God by grace alone, through faith alone, and the peace to us in all of the preceding chapters.

This is how we are made right before God. And there is a doctrinal tightrope to be walked in the gospel, and it is this. We have been saved by God's kindness to us in Christ.

[28 : 03] He accomplished the work. But our faith is not a passive faith, it is an active faith. That's the tightrope that we walk as faithful Christians.

Every other world religion or system sets up rules to attain the next level, whether that's right relationship with God or some kind of enlightenment. Christianity is unique, and it is unique because it is created by our Lord.

He accomplishes the work on our behalf. You add nothing to the equation of your salvation. By grace, through faith, in Christ, it is because God is kind to you that you have a right standing with Him.

You cannot earn it. It is impossible to do. But having been changed from one kind to another kind, good trees produce good fruit.

Our faith is an active faith that shows itself out in the world. Praise God that we can see evidences of His Spirit at work within us. This is a tightrope that we must walk.

[29 : 17] If we fall off one side of the tightrope, we will think that we can live however we want to. I'm saved by grace through faith in Christ. He did the work so I can go do whatever I want.

And this is certainly an error. We have fallen off. It's licentiousness. If we fall off the other side, and this is the side our text speaks to today, then we think we are approved because of our works.

And beloved, this is legalism, and its natural conclusion is to require that others conform to us.

Because if they don't, then the foundation we built for ourselves begins to erode.

If I functionally think that my acceptance before God is because of the way I figured out these types of nuance matters, if that's what I stand on and you don't agree with me, then my stance becomes shaky.

If rather, I stand on the solid rock that cannot be moved. Perfect life, sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[30 : 30] The strong in faith walk right down the middle, and we need each other's help to stay there together. Those who are strong in faith are humble because they believe that it is God who accomplished the work, and then they are turned to each other in love, seeking to get others on the rope and to keep them in that place.

Lots of humility required for this. I'll give you a small example from our congregation. I am not going to use names, and I am not suggesting that one of these brothers is the weaker brother and one the stronger brother in this given scenario.

Just an example of the way two men disagreed and bore with each other in love. It was about the issue of concealed carry. I have an opinion about that.

You can ask me or give me a hug and find out how I feel about it. But the one brother didn't find it appropriate and the other said, oh, it is.

And they talked together. They opened the word together. They were thinking together and trying to think biblically and they didn't agree. But the one who agreed with concealed carry simply said to the other, I think you'll change your mind when you have children.

[31 : 51] And he was patient. He waited. And you know what? One day the other brother had children and fairly promptly began to carry.

How good that was. They didn't get mad at each other and go to fists over the issue. They thought biblically together. They saw each other's point.

And the one just said, I think you may change your mind someday. Please don't hear me setting that up as the great objective of strong faith at all. It's just an example of how we're to bear with one another.

Paul wrote back in Romans chapter 12 in verse 10, love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor, granting to the other, trying to understand, giving them respect.

This is what's going to mark the mature Christian, the one who does not want to grieve, to damage their brother.

[32 : 59] Fourth, and these things really are tying together. They're very similar. There maybe could have been a one total overall exhortation here. Fourthly, do not destroy your brother.

The last half of verse 15, there Paul says, by what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died. Don't grieve your brother and do not destroy your brother.

The word rendered destroyed can be a bit misleading. The Greek scholar W.E. Vine explains this verb this way.

The idea is not extinction, but ruin. Loss, not of being, but of well-being. It's the Greek word and what it means.

Paul is not talking about the brother's damnation. After all, he is one for whom Christ has died. He's making that very clear in the text. Paul is not running in contradiction to his own theology.

[34 : 00] If Christ has saved you, then you are indeed saved. Paul's concern is that your practiced freedom, done irresponsibly, will damage the conscience of this weaker brother, will affect his well-being.

We don't want him tied up with this stuff. We want him staying on that tight rope, believing that he is saved by the grace of God in Christ, that Christ did die for him.

So do not destroy your brother. Fifthly, do not forfeit your witness. We see this in verses 16 through 19. Paul there says, so do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil.

If we separate this verse from its context, this may seem like a command to defend your stances, to stand your ground. I, to my shame, read it this way many times.

It's like I ignored the rest of chapter 14. It was like, yeah, people shouldn't say what's good is bad, but if you place it in its context, as all good Bible exegesis does, we can see that Paul is simply saying, if something good that you can do is regarded by somebody else as evil, then do not do that thing.

[35 : 23] Just don't do it. Practice your Christian liberty by recognizing that you are not justified by what you don't do or by what you do do, but by the sacrificial love of Christ.

You can decide not to do something in order to serve somebody else and still be practicing your Christian liberty. Your Christian liberty exists because you're not enslaved to the law any longer. You've been set free from its condemnation in Christ. You can give something up for the sake of another. This is the kind of love that we're called to.

Should it be shocking to us that the one we're meant to emulate, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, came, condescended to become a man, gave up his position in heaven, humbled himself to be a babe, born amongst animals in a manger, suffered on our behalf both a life and a death, and that he doesn't call us to serve one another sacrificially?

Of course we're meant to give of ourselves for the sake of other people. This exhortation in verse 16 is not stand your ground and get your way. It's give up your way for the love of others.

[36 : 45] And Paul goes on, for the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking. That's not what the kingdom of God is made of, eating and drinking, but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Those who are righteous have their righteousness because of Christ. He's just saying, it's those people who recognize that they are righteous, they are in right standing before God because of what Christ has accomplished on their behalf.

We are to be a people who are at peace with one another because we have peace with God.

Foundational, most important things are settled already. Why do we spend our time arguing about things that are of lesser importance?

And this brings joy. All of this given to us by grace in the Spirit, we are supposed to be a people who are distinct from the world around us.

I am so saddened by the Christians who bicker online, people they don't even know. Just stop.

Whoever thus serves Christ, verse 18 says, in this way, giving up things for the sake of others, sacrificial love, humble service, is acceptable to God, and approved by men.

[38 : 07] This idea of not forfeiting your witness comes from, right? That we would be a people distinct in this way. So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.

That's the fifth exhortation. Six, we're going to come quickly to a landing. Do not destroy the work of God. Verse 20 and 21.

Again, this word is the same word that we mentioned earlier. It could be a bit misleading. It's talking about hurting. Not that you actually can stop the work of God.

God is God, and he wouldn't be God if we could stop his purposes. But bringing some damage to this good that he's doing, bringing together the church as this distinct people, unified, and walking together in love.

Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean. Paul, again, he's defending the position.

[39 : 09] It can be eaten, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats. It is good not to eat meat, or drink wine, or do anything that causes your brother to stumble.

And he goes so far as to say in 1 Corinthians 8 that he would abstain from all meat for the sake of a brother. Do not destroy the work of God.

And seventh and lastly, do not flaunt or forfeit your liberty. I mentioned already this idea of Christian liberty, we've been set free from the law, the type of condemnation that came to us, the knowledge of sin that comes to us, we've been set free from that.

And yet there are things we're meant to do, ways that we're meant to obey, the Lord, and there's a lot of gray in between. And we're all trying to navigate it, and as we've talked through this idea of theological triage, these are those categories I'm calling tertiary, third tier, those things that we're not so sure about.

I so want the black and white text, right? Just bring another law down the mountain to me. God draws us into relationship with him, we pray for wisdom, help us to discern how we walk in a world that is difficult to navigate.

[40 : 25] And so we have this Christian liberty, Peter Paul says, the faith that you have, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves.

It's a happy position to be in, to be settled on those things that you believe God would allow you to do. but whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats because the eating is not from faith.

Not confident that your position is settled before God because of the work of Christ on your behalf. Thinking you're doing a thing to find approval before God, whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.

So the subtle reality of who we are in Christ, if we have believed in Christ, put saving faith in Christ, the work that emanates from that empowered by the Spirit in our lives is not sin, but anything that does not proceed from that settled position is.

And so it's a serious matter to think about how we're to walk together as Christians. I am grateful for a church that by and large does this very well.

[41 : 51] I am discouraged by much of what I see out beyond our doors, but encouraged by much of what I see in here. I hope that as we think about a text like this, and perhaps there's some conviction brought in the process of it, but mostly I hope that you find yourself walking in this way, willing to give up those liberties for the sake of others, that you are encouraged by it, that you see God's good plan in it, that you're reminded of his kindness to you in the gospel of Jesus Christ, that you fold it up and put it in your back pocket because you are going to disagree with somebody at some time.

How do we do that well in a way that's good for us, in a way that gives honor to our God? We certainly need his help to do so, and so let's pray together that he'll help us.

Thank you.