

Living by Faith
Romans 14:19-23

The entire theme of Romans is “*justification by grace through faith.*” God accepts us because of the righteousness of Christ and our faith in Him. We ought to accept one another as believers even when we view and live life differently. The essence of the Christian life is faith in Christ’s righteousness and not our own conduct for acceptance.

I. I am convinced of the gospel.

I will not let anyone or anybody try to tell me my worth is found in my performance. In addition, I will not judge another believer when he lives differently than I do. The truth is, human nature makes it easy to pick out weaknesses in others and look past my own weaknesses and failures. I am accepted by the righteousness of Christ. “*The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*” (v.18).

II. I am concerned for the gospel.

However, I will be flexible in my personal convictions and abstain “from those things that cause you to stumble” when I am with you (v.21), not because the behavior is wrong, or I am more pleasing to God when I act like you, but for your sake I abstain! You may not understand or grasp the freeing power of the gospel --- that’s fine. I am not your judge and I can’t reveal it to you. I trust God to do that work in His time. “*Let us therefore follow after things which bring peace . . . and edify*” (v.19).

(A). I will not force my convictions on you --- (v.20).

“*For meat destroy not the work of God*” means, “Don’t force someone who refuses to eat meat to eat it by judging them if they don’t.” Accept them!

I have my convictions about politics, facial hair, art, drinking, eating and etc . . .

But I enjoy your company if you are different and I don’t demand you change!

(B). I will do all I can to help you abide by your personal convictions --- (v.20).

“*It is evil for that man who eateth with offense*” means that something may be sinful for you, but not me, so I’m going to help you live within your convictions.

III. I am complete through the gospel.

“*Blessed (happy) is the man who does not condemn himself*” (v.22).

The person who enjoys the free power of the gospel lives every day by faith in the Son of God. Life is not so much about “do’s and don’ts” but about Jesus Christ.

This kind of life lived in full view of the world has an evangelistic enticement.

“*The best argument for Christianity is Christians; their joy, their certainty, their completeness. But the strongest argument against Christianity is also Christians --- when they are somber and joyless, when they are self-righteous and smug . . . when they are narrow and repressive, then Christianity dies a thousand deaths.*”

“*When the joy, the certainty, the completeness, and the beauty of the Christian community is cultivated and communicated, evangelism is the glorious result.*”

Sheldon Vanauken