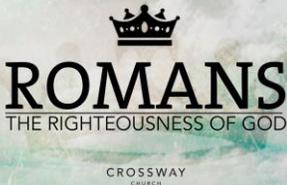


# Apply The Word

www.crosswaypa.org



## Message Info

Title:

Love Clears the Way

Speaker:

Doug Plank

Date:

July 23, 2017

Scriptures

Rom. 14:13-23

**Theme:** Love protects the Church by prizing unity and pursuing peace.

**Introduction:** We are resuming our course into the Apostle Paul's commands to the church: in light of the mercies of God, we are to pursue the good of one another by avoiding the quarrels that exist among us. Verse 13 begins a transition from verse 12 which says: "So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God." There's an accounting that God makes that forms the reasoning behind the care we are to give to one another. It is a most sobering and energizing thing to know that our Father in heaven watches, and takes note of every word, thought and action that we take.

1. Love perceives the problem

- a. The recipients of Paul's letter were divided. Christians divided from Jewish Christians regarding matters of conscience. In verse 13 we can see the rub: those who were of "stronger" conscience (Gentile believers) were leaving stumbling blocks out for the weaker of conscience to trip over. Gentile believers were eating foods and acting in a manner that prevented Jewish believers from interacting with them freely in the Church.
- b. The solution that Paul commands for this complex issue is:
  - i. Develop correct theology. The "strong" in the church of Rome are to adjust their convictions. The old has gone, and the new has come. All foods are declared clean through Jesus Christ.
  - ii. Abstain for unity's sake. If something I do causes a brother in Christ to struggle, I don't need to bring it with me to church. I leave it at home so that there is freedom to fellowship with my brother.

2. Love prizes unity

- a. It cannot be stressed and highlighted enough just how paramount Christian unity is. Unity in the church is crown jewel in the crown of Jesus Christ. One people, unified and brought together in love through Jesus' sacrifice and the Spirit's power.
- b. Division and separation can be a subtle thing. We are naturally drawn to particular types of people in friendship based on personal preference. If our relationships in the church end up being dictated too strictly by matters of conscience and preference, it can lead to division and separatism within the Body.

3. Love pursues peace

- a. The kingdom of God is about righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. These are meant to be our favorite things. These are meant to be the things we showcase in our conversations with one another.
- b. May the Lord help us all to look intently into his Word and seek to place the favorite things of God at the center of our affections so that we would become known for our love for Jesus and our commitment to unity in the Church.
- c. It's a goal worth fighting for.

### Questions

1. Why is Paul correcting a group in the Roman church by telling them to cease and desist? What are they doing that is divisive?
2. Did this message bring to mind any areas where you might be passing judgement on someone or some group in the church? Can you explain?
3. How does this passage challenge you to prize unity and pursue peace in the church?