1) We live honourably when we love weaker believers by putting aside our liberties (Romans 14:13-18).

i) Don't judge one another, but decide to not others to sin (Romans 14:13).

[I'] 13 Therefore, a.) let us no longer judge [PAS, κρίνωμεν, decree, determine] one another.
b.) [A] Instead decide [AAM, κρίνατε, decree, determine] never to put [PAN]
a.) a stumbling block [πρόσκομμα, an obstacle, an offence]
b.) [A] or pitfall [σκάνδαλον, a scandal] in the way of your brother or sister.

ii) You're free to eat what you want but don't grieve another violating kingdom love (Romans 14:14-17).

[M] 1.) 14 I know [RAI, settled truth] 2.) [S] and am persuaded [RMI, absolute truth] [in the Lord Jesus]
[Ed] that nothing is unclean [κοινὸν, common, defiled, unholy] [in itself].
[C?] Still, to someone who considers [PMP] a thing to be [PAN] unclean [κοινὸν],
[E] to that one it is unclean [κοινὸν].
[G] 15 For [C?] if your brother or sister is hurt [PMI, λυπεῖται, grieves] [by what you eat],
[E] you are no longer walking [PAI, περιπατεῖς, living] [according to love].
Do not destroy [PAM, ἀπόλλυε], by what you eat, someone [for whom Christ died [AAI]].
[I'] 16 Therefore, do not let your good be slandered [PMM, βλασφημείσθω, blasphemed],
[G] 17 for the kingdom of God [ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ] is [PAI]
a.) not 1.) eating 2.) [S] and drinking,
b.) [A] but 1.) righteousness, 2.) [S] peace, 3.) [S] and joy [in the Holy Spirit].

iii) Self sacrificing service is approved by God and proven genuine before men (Romans 14:18).

[G] 18 Whoever serves [PAP, δουλεύων] Christ [in this way] *is* 1.) acceptable to God
2.) [S] and receives human approval.

2) We live peaceably by not flaunting our liberties or violating our consciences (Romans 14:19-23).

i) Chase after peace and devote yourselves to building one another up (Romans 14:19).

[I'] 19 So [P] then, let us pursue [PAS] 1.) what promotes peace [εἰρήνης, quietness, rest]
2.) [S] and what builds up [οἰκοδομῆς, structure] [one another].

ii) Do not vandalise God's work, if liberty causes another to stumble, abstain from it (Romans 14:20-21).

20 Do not tear down [PAM, κατάλυε, destroy] God's work [ἔργον τοῦ Θεοῦ] [because of food].
1.) Everything *is* clean,
2.) [A] but it *is* wrong [to make someone fall [προσκόμματος]] by what he eats [PAP].
21 It is a good thing not 1.) to eat [AAN] meat,
2.) [A] or drink [AAN] wine,
3.) [A] or do anything that makes [PPI]
your brother or sister stumble [PAI, προσκόπτει].

iii) The strong mustn't flaunt their liberty, nor the weak violate their conscience (Romans 14:22-23).

22 Whatever you believe [PAI] [about these things], keep [PAM, ἔχε] [between yourself and God].
a.) Blessed is the one who does not condemn [PAP] himself [by what he approves [PAI]].
b.) [A] 23 But whoever doubts [PMP] [E] stands condemned [RMI]
[C?] if he eats [AAS],
[G] because his eating is not from faith, [P] and everything that is not from faith is [PAI] sin.

Sermon preparation worksheet

Passage: Romans 14:13-23

1. How has the author organised this passage? *a) An outline, b) Tools, c) The emphasis.*

a) 1) We live honourably when we love weaker believers by putting aside our liberties (Romans 14:13-18).

i) Don't judge one another, but decide to not others to sin (Romans 14:13).

ii) You're free to eat what you want but don't grieve another violating kingdom love (Romans 14:14-17).

iii) Self sacrificing service is approved by God and proven genuine before men (Romans 14:18).

2) We live peaceably by not flaunting our liberties or violating our consciences (Romans 14:19-23).

i) Chase after peace and devote yourselves to building one another up (Romans 14:19).

ii) Do not vandalise God's work, if liberty causes another to stumble, abstain from it (Romans 14:20-21).

iii) The strong mustn't flaunt their liberty, nor the weak violate their conscience (Romans 14:22-23).

b) I identified Romans 14:13-23 as discourse, and used grammatical syntax analysis. I took note of repeated words (ἀδελφός, πρόσκομμα, κρίνω, κοινόν/καθαρός, βρῶμα and πεῖν) which helped me identify the emphasis, verbs (especially the imperatives, κρίνατε, ἀπόλλυε, βλασφημείσθω, κατάλυε, ἔχε) which helped me understand the tone, conjunctions (especially the inference, οὖν), which helped me identify the outline. The οὖν in Romans 14:13, pivots from the preceding discussion on judgment to the ethical command. The second οὖν in Romans 14:19, moves the discussion from kingdom priorities to practical community conduct.

c) Strong Christians mustn't flaunt their liberty, nor weak Christians violate their conscience so that we may live peacefully before God and man.

2. How does the context inform the meaning of this passage? *a) Literary, b) Historical, c) Cultural, d) Biblical.*

a) In Romans 14:10-12, Paul writes of each person giving an account to God before the judgment seat of Christ. In Romans 15:1-7, Paul presents Christ as the ultimate example of self-sacrifice. This matters because in Romans 14:13-23, accountability to God frees the strong from needing to flaunt their liberty and the weak from judging others, so that both groups can pursue the goal of living peacefully before God and man.

b) After the Emperor Claudius expelled Jews from Rome, Gentile believers led the church alone. When Jewish believers returned under Nero, tensions arose over dietary laws and sacred days. This matters because the command to live peaceably is the only way to hold a divided church together. The strong not flaunting their liberty, excluding their returning brothers, and the weak not judging Gentile brothers but acting from faith.

c) Jewish dietary laws were a central marker of covenant identity, to eat unclean food was to defile oneself and compromise holiness. Table fellowship was deeply social, eating together expressed acceptance and unity. This matters because flaunting liberty by eating freely without regard for the weak would exclude Jewish believers from community, while violating conscience by eating against deeply held convictions would wound the weak and lead them into sin. Both destroy the peaceful community God desires.

d) The stumbling block metaphor in Romans 14:13, 20, 21 is the same metaphor from Leviticus 19:14, which forbids putting an obstacle before the blind. The description of the kingdom in Romans 14:17 alludes to Isaiah 32:16-18, prophetic hope of God's reign as righteousness, peace, and joy.

3. What is the main point the author is arguing to *his audience?*

The church embodies peace before God and man when the strong do not flaunt liberty, nor the weak violate conscience.

4. How does this passage connect to the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Christ died for those who are weak. To destroy them by flaunting liberty is to tear down God's work. Christ died for those who are weak. For them to violate conscience by acting apart from faith is to sin against the God who accepted them the way they are through Christ. Because Christ died and rose, we needn't flaunt liberty to prove ourselves, nor fear condemnation by resting in faith. The gospel frees us to embody the kingdom's righteousness, peace, and joy, living peaceably before God and man.

5. What is the main point you will argue to *your audience*?

The gospel call is to pursue peace together by limiting liberties and honouring consciences.

6. What applications will you make? *a) To believers, b) To unbelievers.*

a) Identify a liberty you should limit for a brother's sake or a matter of conscience you should honour for Christ's sake. Before you act in the week to come, ask yourself, Can I do this with full faith that I do no harm to those around me and God accepts me in Christ?

b) See in this church a peace the world cannot produce, and turn to the Christ who makes it possible. Say in your heart, Lord I need Jesus to forgive my sin and help me to love my God and my fellow man.

7. What is your sermon title and your preaching outline? *a) Sermon outline, b) Sermon title.*

b) Vandals in God's temple: How to build one another up instead of tearing each other down.

a) 1) The verdict that changes everything (Romans 14:13-18)

i) Stop judging one another, start judging yourself (Romans 14:13)

ii) Stop your freedom where your brother's conscience begins (Romans 14:14-17)

ii) Stop living for your rights, start living for the kingdom (Romans 14:18)

2) The pursuit that proves everything (Romans 14:19-23)

i) Pursue peace with aggression (Romans 14:19)

ii) Protect God's work from vandalism (Romans 14:20-21)

iii) Preserve your conscience by faith (Romans 14:22-23)

Pray

Read Romans 14:13-23

13 Therefore, let us no longer judge one another. Instead decide never to put a stumbling
block or pitfall in the way of your brother or sister. 14 I know and am persuaded in the Lord
Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself. Still, to someone who considers a thing to be unclean,
to that one it is unclean. 15 For if your brother or sister is hurt by what you eat, you are no
longer walking according to love. Do not destroy, by what you eat, someone for whom
Christ died. 16 Therefore, do not let your good be slandered, 17 for the kingdom of God is not
eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. 18 Whoever serves
Christ in this way *is* acceptable to God and receives human approval.
19 So then, let us pursue what promotes peace and what builds up one another. 20 Do not tear
down God's work because of food. Everything *is* clean, but it *is* wrong to make someone fall
by what he eats. 21 It is a good thing not to eat meat, or drink wine, or do anything that
makes your brother or sister stumble. 22 Whatever you believe about these things, keep
between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who does not condemn himself by what he
approves. 23 But whoever doubts stands condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from
faith, and everything that is not from faith is sin.

Introduction

Last Sunday, a group went for lunch at Piatto after the morning service. The conversation was great as we sat around the table. When the waiter came to take the drink order, one of us ordered an ice-cold Heineken. It felt like there was an awkward pause. I imagine one side of the table may have thought, *Are they really going to drink that here? What does that say about our witness?* And I imagine the other side of the table may have thought, *They have freedom in Christ. Are they policing their liberty?*

We're not going to resolve the alcohol debate this morning. The point is we have differing views alcohol consumption. We have differing views about being inked. Differing views about celebrating Christmas. And differing views about which day of the week we should worship on.

How do we, as a church, handle our differences? The world has an answer. Find your tribe and build your wall. But the gospel has another answer entirely. And we find it in Romans 14. So turn with me, please, to Romans 14:13.

1) The verdict that changes everything (Romans 14:13-18)

13 Therefore is a massive pivot. It connects back to the judgment seat of Christ in Romans 14:10-12. Each of us will give an account to God. 13 Therefore, Let us no longer judge one another. Instead decide never to put a stumbling block or pitfall in the way of your brother or sister. Rome's church was divided. Jewish believers returned to Rome to find Gentile believers leading. Dietary laws and table fellowship were splitting them apart. Into the tension Paul writes, stop judging one another. And start judging yourself. Decide. Resolve. Determine that you will never be the reason another believer stumbles. Place a barrier around your own liberty. Not a stumbling block before your brother.

14 I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself. Paul is convinced. Liberty is real. But reality is relational. Still, to someone who considers a thing to be unclean, to that one it is unclean. Truth does not trample tenderness.

15 For if your brother or sister is hurt by what you eat, you are no longer walking according to love. To knowingly exercise a liberty that grieves another is to stop walking in love. And to stop walking in love is to destroy someone for whom Christ died. Don't use your freedom in Christ as a weapon against the cross of Christ. 16 Do not let your good be slandered. The world watches Christians bicker over non-essentials and concludes the good news isn't very good. That we are just group of people with differences fighting for our rights.

Here's the reason. 17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Christianity isn't about what goes into the stomach. It is about what fills the soul. Righteousness. Peace. Joy.

18 Whoever serves Christ in this way *is* acceptable to God and receives human approval. The one who limits liberty for a weaker brother serves Christ. Is approved by God. And is proven genuine before men.

Liezl and I bought an old house. Liezl wants to renovate. A wall in our lounge cramps her style. The house belongs to us. We have the freedom to remove any wall we want to. But can you imagine we knock the wall down? And then find out that it was load-bearing. Our right to renovate could collapse the entire structure. When we flaunt our liberties without love, we can bring down another's house of faith. And that's unkind, unloving, and un-Christian.

Christians are freed to stop judging others and start judging ourselves. And so we limit our liberties to build up our brothers rather than tear them down.

The verdict is in. Stop judging and start loving by limiting liberty. This verdict must be lived out. So Paul moves from the love principle to the practice of peace.

2) The pursuit that proves everything (Romans 14:19-23)

19 So then connects back to the kingdom. Because the kingdom is righteousness, peace, and joy, here is what we do. Let us pursue. The word is means to chase. To hunt. To press toward. This is not passive. Not accidental. Not optional. Chase peace. Hunt it down. Devote yourselves to what builds up one another. Builds up is a construction word. Every time you choose not to exercise your freedom for the sake of a brother, you are not just being nice, you are building something. You are laying a brick in the wall of the church. You are constructing a home where a tender conscience can find shelter.

20 Do not tear down. Destroy. Demolish. God's work. What is God's work? The brother for whom Christ died. The sister with a tender conscience. The weak may not be new Christians. But their consciences have been formed by a particular tradition. They are not necessarily legalists. But for them certain things feel forbidden. Even if the Bible does not forbid them. Do not demolish them because of food. Because of your right to eat what you want. Everything *is* clean. Paul affirms it again. You are free. But don't let your freedom crush a conscience. Do not demolish a brother for whom Christ died. To do that would be to pit yourself against God.

Paul expands. Not just meat. Wine. anything. Your hobby. Your holiday. Your social media. Things which are morally neutral. Lawful things, but not helpful things. Permissible but not beneficial. If it causes your brother or sister stumble, it is not worth it. The same idea is found in Leviticus 19:14. Do not put a stumbling block in front of the blind. To flaunt your liberty before a weak conscience is to trip a blind man. It is cruel. It is sinful. It is unworthy of the gospel. 22 Whatever you believe about these things, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who does not condemn himself by what he approves. Liberty limited by love is a good thing.

Now Paul turns to the weak. To the tender conscience. Do not violate your own conscience. If you doubt, do not do it. If you are unsure, abstain. Not because the thing itself is wrong. But because everything that is not from faith is sin. Faith trusts God. Faith rests in Christ. Faith acts with confidence. To act while doubting is to act apart from trust. And apart from trust is sin.

Picture two cars approaching a narrow bridge at the same time. With room for only one to pass. Both drivers have the right to proceed. But if both insist on their right, they will collide. One driver must yield. Because yielding is the only way either gets home. The Christian life is a narrow bridge. We yield our right of way so that we cross together.

The verdict proves itself genuine when we pursue peace, protect God's work, and preserve conscience by faith. And preserve conscience by faith.

But what power makes such a community possible?

Connect to the gospel

What force is strong enough to make a man surrender his rights? What fire is hot enough to purify a weak conscience from its fear? One force. One fire. The gospel of Jesus Christ.

Behold the cross. Christ died for the weak. Not the strong. Not the enlightened. Not those who had all their doctrines perfectly aligned. The weak. The ones with trembling consciences. The ones who would stumble over a piece of meat. Christ died for them.

Now consider what Paul has said. To flaunt your liberty before a weak brother is to tear down God's work. And what is God's work? The brother for whom Christ died. Do you see the horror? To destroy a brother by your freedom is to vandalise the very purchase of the cross. Christ purchased that man with His own blood. His own blood. And you will demolish him over a pork chop? Verily, it is unthinkable.

And to the weak, Paul speaks with equal weight. Christ died for you. He accepted you while your conscience was still trembling. He did not wait for you to become strong. He did not demand that you first see your liberty. He died for you weak. So why would you now act apart from faith? Why would you reach for what your conscience forbids? To violate your own faith is to sin against the God who received you exactly as you are.

The cross levels us all. The strong flaunt liberty to prove themselves. Christ already secured your acceptance. He died for you. You have nothing left to prove. The weak fear condemnation if they do not conform. But Christ already bore your condemnation. He bore it all. You have nothing left to fear.

The resurrection seals it. He rose. He reigns. He returns. And because He lives, you are free to stop performing. Free to stop pretending. Free to limit your liberty without resentment. Free to honour your conscience without shame. The kingdom is not eating or drinking. It is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. And you cannot produce those things by flaunting your rights or by fearing your doubts. They come only from resting in Christ.

This, then, is the gospel call. Not a suggestion. Not a helpful tip for better relationships. An imperative. A summons from the risen Christ Himself. The gospel call is to pursue peace together. By limiting liberties and honouring consciences.

So the cross levels us. The empty tomb frees us. The ascended Lord reigns over us. Now, what does that look like when the waiter comes and asks for your drink order? Let me tell you.

Believers

Now let us be specific. What must you do in light of the gospel truth we've learnt?

Brothers, identify one liberty you must limit. One freedom you possess. One right you could exercise. And for the sake of a brother, lay it down. Perhaps it is your leisure. What you watch. Where you go. How you spend your time. Perhaps it is your preference. A style of music. The way the service runs. The colour of the carpet. Things that do not matter. Things that become weapons.

Identify one matter of conscience you must honour. One doubt you have ignored. One action you have taken while your heart trembled. And abstain from it. Because acting apart from faith is sin. Protect your conscience today. But do not stay here. Bring your doubts to the Word. Let Scripture inform your conscience so that your freedom, like your faith, rest on what Christ has done.

Here is your measure. Before you act this week. Before you speak this week. Before you post or purchase or proceed. Ask yourself one question. *Can I do this in faith?* And , *Do I do no harm to those around me?* If you cannot answer yes, then stop. Do not move. Do not act. This is not about perfection. This is about peace. Not about proving yourself. About building your brother. You will fail. We all fail. But failure is not the end. Confession is the path. Return to the cross. Rest in Christ. And try again. One liberty. One matter of conscience. This week. Do this. And watch God build His church.

Unbelievers

And to you who does not yet know Christ. You who watches from the outside. You who sees the church and wonder. The world cannot produce what you see here. The world runs on rights. My rights. My freedom. My way. The world teaches you to insist. To demand. To fight for what is yours. And where has that gotten you? Conflict. Loneliness. Exhaustion. You fight for your rights and win nothing.

But here. Here in this church. Here among these flawed and failing people. You glimpse something else. Men surrendering their rights. The strong limiting their liberty. The weak honouring their conscience. Not because they must. Because they love. Not because they're forced. Because they're free. This peace you have seen, it does not grow on earth. It descends from heaven. It comes from Christ.

And He offers it to you. Not religion. Not rules. Not a list of foods to avoid. Himself. Jesus Christ who died for the weak. Who purchased sinners with His own blood. Who rose and reigns and returns. He offers you forgiveness. He offers you peace. He offers you a place with these people. Not as a spectator. As a brother. As a son.

Here is your action. Today. Now. In your heart. Pray this prayer. Not with eloquent words. Say, Lord, I need Jesus. I need Him to forgive my sin. I need Him to help me love my God and my fellow man. That is enough. That is the beginning. Do this today. And the peace you have seen today will be yours forever.

Conclusion

So we return to where we began. To the table. To the awkward pause. To the differing views.

The world watches. The world expects us to divide. Choose our tribe. Build our wall. The world knows only one way to handle difference. Fight for your rights or flee to your corner.

But we are not of this world. We are of the kingdom. And the kingdom is not eating and drinking. Not Heineken. Not hymns. Not holidays. Not hobbies. The kingdom is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. And you cannot produce those things by flaunting your rights or by fearing your doubts. They come only from resting in Christ.

So here is the verdict that changes everything. Stop judging one another. And start judging yourself. Limit your liberty. Not because you must. Because you love. Not because you are forced. Because you are free.

Here is the pursuit that proves everything. Chase peace. Hunt it down. Protect God's work. Do not vandalise with your freedom the brother for whom Christ died. Preserve your conscience by faith. Do not act while your heart trembles. Act from faith. Rest in Christ.

Our table did not divide. Not because everyone agreed. But because we lay down our rights for others. That is church. We have a peace the world cannot produce. A peace that must be pursued. As we limit our liberties. And do not violate our consciences.

The benediction

Romans 16:25-27, Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation about Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept silent for long ages but now revealed and made known through the prophetic Scriptures, according to the command of the eternal God to advance the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles – to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ – to him be the glory for ever! Amen.

This is how I parse Greek verbs:

- I use a three-letter combination in square brackets (e.g. [PMI] for Present, Middle, Indicative) after a verb, which I underline.
  1. First letter indicates the tense. Tense deals both with time and kind of action.
  2. Second letter indicates the voice. The relation of the subject or agent to the action.
  3. Third letter indicates the mood, participle, or infinitive.
- Tense:
  - P: present, continuous or linear action.
  - I: imperfect, continuous action in the past.
  - F: future, both progressive and punctiliar action.
  - A: aorist, expresses punctiliar action that has happened.
  - R: perfect, represents an action that is complete but has an ongoing resultant state of being.
- Voice:
  - A: active, reflects the subject that performs the action.
  - M: middle, the agent participates in the results of the action.
  - P: passive, subject is being acted upon by someone or something else.
- Mood/participle/infinitive:
  - I: indicative, reality, that which is actually occurring.
  - S: subjunctive, likely to occur.
  - M: imperative, a command that is possible.
  - P: participle, participles are verbal adjectives that behave like a verb and an adjective..
  - N: infinitive, verbal nouns that use the preposition "to", and they can also be used with "ing".

This is how I indicate the function of conjunctions:

- I put a letter in square brackets before a clause to indicate a logical relationship.
  - [S] - SERIES, Each proposition makes an independent contribution to the whole (and, moreover, furthermore).
  - [P] - PROGRESSION, Each proposition is a further step toward a climax (then, and, moreover, furthermore).
  - [A] - ALTERNATIVE, Each proposition expresses an opposite possibility arising from a situation (or, but while...).
  - [W] [Ed] - WAY-END (ACTION-MANNER), Statement of an action and one which tells more explicitly what is involved in carrying out this action (in that, by).
  - [/] [/] - COMPARISON, Statement that clarifies an action or idea by showing what it is like (even as, as…so).
  - [-] [+] - NEGATIVE-POSITIVE, The relationship between two alternatives in which one is denied so the other is enforced, implicit in contrasting statements (not…but).
  - [Gn] [Sp] - GENERAL-SPECIFIC, Statement of a whole and one or more statements which set forth parts of the whole.
  - [Ft] [In] - FACT-INTERPRETATION, Statement and clarifying statement; does not set forth a distinguishable part of the preceding whole.
  - [G] - GROUND, Statement followed by the argument or reason on which it stands; supporting proposition follows the supported proposition (for, since, because).
  - [I'] - INFERENCE, Supporting statement followed by the conclusion drawn from it; supporting proposition precedes the supported proposition (therefore, wherefore, consequently).
  - [C] [E] - CAUSE-EFFECT (ACTION-RESULT), One action and another action which results from the first as an automatic consequence (that, so that, with the result that).
  - [C?] [E] - CONDITIONAL, Like cause-effect except existence of the cause is only potential (if…then, if, except...).
  - [M] [Ed] - MEANS-END (ACTION-PURPOSE), One action and another that is intended as the goal or purpose of the first (in order that, that, lest, to the end that).
  - [T] - TEMPORAL, Proposition and the occasion when it occurs (when, after, before).
  - [L] - LOCATIVE, Proposition and the place where it can be true (where, wherever).
  - [Adv] - ADVERSATIVE, Main clause that stands despite a contrary statement (although, yet, but, nevertheless).
  - [Q] [A] - QUESTION-ANSWER, Statement of question and answer to that question (question mark ?).
  - [S] [R] - SITUATION-RESPONSE, The relationship between a situation in one clause and a response in another.
  - [B] [L] - BILATERAL, A proposition which supports propositions in both directions, rarely used.

This is how I use colour highlighting:

- Orange: structure indicator, conjunctions, and prepositions.
- Yellow: verbs, Greek, and Scripture reference.
- Green: keywords.
- Red: repeated words.
- Pink: imperatives.
- Blue: main idea.

On my sermon preparation sheet, these are the questions and an explanation:

1. **How has the author organised this passage?**
   a) An outline: The author's organization (or structure) is a way of talking about the shape or form of a biblical passage. Beneath the surface of each passage is an underlying arrangement of material and a logic that the author has used to organize the passage. And each part of the passage has a role to play in that structure.
   b) Tools: Identify the text type, and any grammatical tools used to identify the structure.
   c) The emphasis: The structure will reveal an emphasis that the author is making.
2. **How does the context inform the meaning of this passage?**
   a) Literary context: How do the passage that comes before and the passage that comes after relate to your passage?
   b) Historical context: The historical situation or circumstances experienced by the first audience at the time when the book was written.
   c) Cultural context: The setting in the daily life of the people/characters in the book and how that will have been understood by the first audience. This is distinct from historical context in that it does not relate to a particular audience in a particular place at a particular time, but the details of life that the people/characters in the text had in common. Anything that requires extra-biblical knowledge should be treated skeptically.
   d) Biblical context: Is the author citing or alluding to some previously written Biblical passage? What connections could the author have reasonably expected his first audience to make.
3. **What is the main point the author is arguing to his audience?**
   The author's main point is a way of talking about the aim of a passage as a whole. It can be descriptive or prescriptive. It is not simply a summary statement. But rather, it is the idea of which the author is trying to persuade his audience. As you work on articulating the author's argument, please keep in mind that it needs to be specific enough to the passage that it clearly comes from the particular passage (and not any other passage), it is for the first audience, it should be one single sentence that is both short and clear, and captures the argument of the passage.
4. **How does this passage connect to the gospel of Jesus Christ?**
   What part of the gospel (the death and resurrection of Christ) is in view? Every part of the Bible, every passage of Scripture, in some way relates to the gospel of Jesus Christ. What parts of the passage connect to the gospel? The connection must be legitimate and textually driven.
5. **What is the main point you will argue to your audience?**
6. **What applications will you make? a) To believers, b) To unbelievers.**
   The main point of a sermon is the fundamental statement of what you, as a speaker today, are trying to convince your audience today. It will certainly be intimately related to the author's main point for his original audience and it will consider the gospel connection. It should be well reasoned and, perhaps, articulated as the result of proof (so depending on premises and building arguments).
7. What is your sermon title and your preaching outline? a) Sermon outline, b) Sermon title.

On my sermon preparation sheet, this is how questions relate to one another:

- 1 a) should be driven by the text.
- 1 c) should be driven from the outline in 1 a).
- 2) should be directly relevant to 1 c).
- 3) cannot be disconnected from 1 c), and should be clarified by 2).
- 4) must be found in the text.
- 5) cannot be disconnected from 3), and should be driven by 4).
- 6) should flow from 5).
- 7) should structurally relate to 1 a), and make the argument in 5).