

Liberty in Love

Rom 14:1-4 ¹ Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. ² For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. ³ Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. ⁴ Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

Once again I would remind you this morning that in chapters 1-11 Paul instructed us in the means of our salvation, then in chapters 12-13 he instructs us in our response is to be toward one another, toward those outside the faith and toward the authority of government. He instructs how to respond as God's elect who have been made recipients of so great a salvation. Now he begins to instruct us in the matter of Christian liberty.

Issues are affecting that early New Testament Church. The church is no longer just Jewish, it is now made up of a great body of different races, tribes, nationalities, and social status. It is not some kind of a Country Club that may only permit certain strata of society in their midst. But in the church there are now slaves and slave owners, Gentiles and Jews, males and females that make up the social structure of the church. The Jews came from a background of certain dietary laws of which the Gentiles had no knowledge. They were from a tradition that kept certain religious days, again of which the Gentiles had no such background. They may well have continued to circumcise their sons but the Gentile families did not do so. So one can readily see how this could be a problem in the church. Today we come from different cultures and backgrounds and therefore we too may have differing customs. In our day the church is made up of rich and poor, educated and uneducated, business men and union workers, we may even be of different political opinions but we are all able to unite in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We must understand then that Paul here is pressing the church to three carefully laid out attitudes in the church. 1. Liberty in things that are indifferent; 2. Liberty toward one another with charity and understanding; and 3. All such life styles are to be undertaken in a manner to give honor to God.

A. Liberty in things that are indifferent.

1. There is no liberty in sound doctrine, that is, no liberty to believe whatever you want to believe, or whatever you feel is right.
2. Sound doctrine must be considered an essential requirement upon all in the church.
 - a. Absolute authority of Holy Scripture in what one is to believe and how one is to live.
 - b. The doctrine of creation, and the correctness of the historicity of Holy Scripture.
 - c. The person and work of Christ.
 - d. The gospel cannot be compromised.
3. But doesn't doctrine divide? Yes - but sound doctrine also unites and cannot be compromised.
4. When we speak of "Things Indifferent" we speak of things not specifically taught in Scripture.
 - a. We are bound where Scripture speaks
 - b. We are not bound by men's opinions
 - c. H C Question 91 gives us good instruction here.

91. But what are good works?

Those only which proceed from true faith, and are done according to the Law of God, unto His glory, and not such as rest on our own opinion or the commandments of men.

5. There are two extreme opposite we must guard against, legalism and license.
6. Legalist - touch not, taste not, handle not.
 - a. Pharisees in Christ day are good examples of the legalist.

Mark 7:7-8 And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men — the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do."

- b. Paul then warns against those that make rules concerning, what you may eat, or what you may drink, or religious day you may observe.
 - c. Notice such man made rules set aside God's authority.
 - d. Attending sport events, wearing of jewelry, make up, or length of dress.
 - e. Pharisees were examples of the O T "Higher Life or Holiness Movement" that since the days of Finny and Moody have affected the church today.
7. On the other hand you have those who would give license to sinful behavior.
- a. Sadducees that rejected Biblical truth
 - b. Liberals of today that approve of homosexual lifestyles and the ordaining of women to the office of pastor.
 - c. Christian liberty **never permits** disobedience of God's law.
8. In the church one may feel free to have a glass of wine, another would consider it wrong.
9. One may observe certain days another not be able to.
10. But when we do have difference in matter not specific in Scripture how do we deal with one another?

B. Liberty toward one another with charity and understanding

Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. ² For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. ³ Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him.

- 1. Scripture is very clear here.
- 2. We receive all in the church when the issues are based on opinions not God's law.
- 3. We point out last week how some could not eat things that had been sacrificed to idols.
- 4. How are we to react?
 - a. The one that can eat meat must not despise the one who does not eat meat.
 - b. At the same time the one that cannot eat meat, must not judge the one who does.
 - c. Why? God has received him.
- 5. Some feel that a Christmas tree is not acceptable others decorated trees at Christmas time.
- 6. We must show charity to all when the issue is difference in things indifferent.
- 7. But note the instruction of Paul to the church. - It was a "two way street"
 - a. The one who eats was not to despise or fault the one who could not.
 - b. The one who could not was not to judge the one who did.
- 8. The Lord willing we hope to begin to evangelize the lost.
 - a. The Lord willing we will have new Christians in our midst.
 - b. We must receive them for God has received them
 - c. No doubt they will need to be taught and we must be gentle and teach them.
- 9. We must not pass judgment on things indifferent but we must know the difference. - *Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.*
 - a. Cannot approve of sin in a members life.
 - b. Must make judgment regarding, adultery, drunkenness, immorality, gossip, backbiting etc.
 - c. Such judgment is not making personal judgment, but letting God through His Word make such judgment.

CONCLUSION: Whatever we do; do to the glory of God.

Rom 14:5-7 5 One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks.

If you feel free to observe certain days - do it to the honor and glory of God
 If you are able to eat or drink certain things give God thanks and do it to the glory of God
 If you do not observe certain day - do not observe those days to the glory of God
 If you are not able to eat or drink certain things give God thanks do not do so to the glory of God.

Let us learn in all things to be careful to be obedient to the clear teachings of God's Word.
 Let us learn to grant liberty to one another in all things indifferent
 And above all let us do all to the glory of God