

BIBLICAL LIBERTY AND LOVE GO TOGETHER

Romans 14:1-12

INTRODUCTION:

Disunity has always been a major problem with God's people. Even the Old Testament records the civil wars and family disputes among the people of Israel. We find that almost every church mentioned in the New Testament had some type of division or contention in their ranks. The Corinthian church was divided over their human leaders.

***1 Corinthians 1:12-13 2 Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ."
13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?***

Some of the church members were even suing each other even though this was creating a terrible miss representation of the Body of Christ in the worldly courts.

1 Corinthians 6:1-5 Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints?

2 Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters?

3 Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?

4 If then you have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge?

5 I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren?

The Galatian believer's were biting and devouring one another according to what Paul tells us in:

Galatians 5:15-16 But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!

And we find Paul having to exhort the Ephesians and Colossian churches about the importance of Christian unity:

***Ephesians 4:1-4 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called,
2 ¶ with all lowliness and gentleness, with long-suffering, bearing with one another in love,
3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
4 [There is] one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling;***

***Colossians 2:1-2 For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and [for] as many as have not seen my face in the flesh,
2 that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and [attaining] to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ,***

In the church at Phillipi, two women were at odds with each other and as a result, were in the process of splitting the church.

***Phillipians 4:1-4 Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.
2 I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.
3 And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names [are] in the Book of Life.
4 Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!***

No wonder we find the Psalmists writing is these words of encouragement, and promise:

Psalms 133:1 ¶ <<A Song of Ascents. Of David.>> Behold, how good and how pleasant [it is] For brethren to dwell together in unity!

Some of the problems in the early church stemmed from the backgrounds of those believers who had come onto the church. The Jews, for example, were saved out of a strict legalistic background that would be difficult to leave; because of years of tradition, and physical, mental, and spiritual conditioning. The Gentiles on the other hand never had to worry about diets and special holidays. Their life was comprised of non religious activities. Where as the Jewish believers had a rich tradition that the Judiazers were determined to keep them bound by.

The first church council that was formed had to deliberate over the issues that we have just been talking about. There were such things as the Law, and the new Christians responsibility now that they were saved.

Acts 15:1-10 And certain [men] came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."

2 Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.

3 So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren.

4 And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them.

5 But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command [them] to keep the law of Moses." And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: "Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.

8 "So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as [He did] to us,

9 "and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

10 "Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?"

The church at Rome had become divided over some of the earlier issues that had plagued the church in its early beginnings. Some of the members thought that it was a sin not to observe the Jewish holy days. Paul had something to say about this to the church at Colosse.

Colossians 2:16 So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths,

In such issues it would have never become necessary for Paul to address the issue if each Christian had kept his convictions to himself. The end result was that they began to judge and criticize one another. Each group became convinced that the other was not spiritual.

Before we look at the verses in Romans 14 that outline the problem in this church let us define some terms, and look at some scriptures.

Terms:

Judge:

Definition: To distinguish; decide; try; condemn

Weak:

Definition: to be feeble

Disputes:

Definition: judicial estimation

Definition: to separate thoroughly; withdraw from; oppose; discriminate

1 Thessalonians 5:14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.

Disputes:

1 Timothy 1:3-4 As I urged you when I went into Macedonia--remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, 4 nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith.

If there is any activity that should be important to the Body of Christ, it should be our desire to "Receive" truth from God, in prayer, from the Word of God, by the Holy Spirit's direction, from God's people, as they instruct us from the Word of God; and as they exercise their gifts. Word of knowledge, word of prophecy, word of wisdom.

Judge:

Psalms 51:4 Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done [this] evil in Your sight--That You may be found just when You speak, [And] blameless when You judge.

Romans 2:1-3 Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.

2 But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things.

3 And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?

Weak:

1 Corinthians 1:27-29 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; 28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, 29 that no flesh should glory in His presence.

“THE LAW OF LIBERTY” Vv.1-12

1. GOD HAS RECEIVED US! - VS. 1-3

Whose faith is weak. Probably Jewish Christian; at Rome who were unwilling to give up the observance of certain requirements of the law, such as dietary restrictions and the keeping of the Sabbath and other special days. Their concern was not quite the same as that of the Judaizers of Falatia. The Judaizers thought they could put God in their life by works of righteousness and were trying to force this heretical teaching on the Falatian churches, but the “weak” Roman Christians did neither. They were not yet clear as to the status of OT regulations under the new covenant inaugurated by the coming of Christ. Without passing judgment on disputable matters. Fellowship among Christians is not to be based on everyone’s agreement on disputable questions. Christians do not agree on all matters pertaining to the Christian life, nor do they need to.

Romans 14:2 For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats [only] vegetables.

Colossians 2:6-7 As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, 7 rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught,

One man’s faith. In contrast, Paul now describes the “string” Christian. Here faith is used in the sense of assurance or confidence. The strong Christian’s understanding of the gospel allows him to recognize that one’s diet has no spiritual significance.

2. GOD HAS SUSTAINED US! - V.4

Nehemiah 9:21 Forty years You sustained them in the wilderness, They lacked nothing; Their clothes did not wear out And their feet did not swell.

Romans 14:4 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.

Someone else's. God's. A Christian must not reject a fellow Christian, who is also a servant of God. To his own master he stands or falls. The "weak" Christian is not the master of his "strong" brother, nor is the "strong" the master of the "weak". God is Master, and to him alone all believers are responsible.

3. JESUS IS LORD OVER US! - VS. 5-9

Romans 14:5 5 One person esteems [one] day above another; another esteems every day [alike]. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.

One day more sacred than another. Some feel that this refers primarily to the Sabbath, but it is probably a reference to all the special days of the OT ceremonial law. Considers every day alike. All days are to be dedicated to God through holy living and godly service. Fully convinced in his own mind. The importance of personal conviction on disputable matters of conduct runs through this passage (see vs. 14,116,22-23).

Romans 14:6 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.

The motivation behind the actions of both the strong and the weak is to be the same. Both should want to serve the Lord and give thanks for his provision.

Romans 14:7 7 For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself.

None of us lives to himself alone. The reference is to “us” Christians. We do not live to please ourselves but the Lord. None of us dies to himself alone. Even in death the important thing is one’s relationship to the Lord. Paul repeats the truths of this verse in v. 8.

Note on Verse 9:

Romans 10:9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Jesus is Lord. The earliest Christian confession of faith (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:3), probably was at baptisms. In view of the fact that “Lord” (Greek Kyrios) is used over 6,000 times in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the OT) to translate the name of Israel’s God (Yahweh), it is clear that Paul, when using this word of Jesus, is ascribing deity to him. In your heart. In biblical terms the heart is not merely the seat of the emotions and affections, but also of the intellect and will. God raised him from the dead. A bedrock truth of Christian doctrine (see 1 Corinthians 15:4, 14, 17) and the central thrust of apostolic preaching (see e.g., Acts 2:31-32, 3:15, 4:10, 10:40). Christians believe not only that Jesus lived but also that he still lives. Will be saved. In the future tense. Paul is thinking of final salvation - salvation at the last day.

Psalms 19:9 The fear of the LORD [is] clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD [are] true [and] righteous altogether.

1 Corinthians 12:3 Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

4. JESUS WILL JUDGE US! - VS. 10-12

Psalms 7:8 The LORD shall judge the peoples; Judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, And according to my integrity within me.

Matthew 7:1-2 "Judge not, that you be not judged.

2 "For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.

2 Timothy 4:1 I charge [you] therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:

2 Timothy 4:8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

James 4:11 Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.

1 Peter 4:5 They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

Special Note:

Interesting illustration in John 21:5-25, here we find Jesus restoring Peter.

THE LAW OF LOVE Vv.14-23

1. Christians effect each other! vs. 13-15

2. Christians must have priorities! vs. 16-18

3. Christians must help one another grow! vs. 19-21