

Working Together In Matters of Judgment

Romans 14:1 - 15:6

INTRODUCTION.

- A. Churches of Christ face many challenges standing for the truth and maintaining unity within the local congregation. Too often we allow things not determined by scripture to interfere with this unity.
- B. During the first century, there were many Jews, as well as Gentiles, converted to Christianity. Both the converted Jew and Gentile carried with them practices from their previous lives. In Romans 14, Paul addressed the problem of brethren judging and despising each other because of those practices.
- C. What made the division so unnecessary is that the problems developed from beliefs and ideas not bound by the word of God.
- D. It is the purpose of this lesson to examine Romans 14:1 - 15:6 and show the importance and means of working together in matters of personal judgment and opinions.
 - 1. Note: When I use the phrase “personal judgment and opinions,” I am referring to matters not legislated by scriptures.
 - 2. These would be those items not specifically bound by the scriptures.

I. THE FAITHFUL ARE EQUAL IN THE SIGHT OF GOD. (Romans 14:1-12)

- A. Paul began by telling the stronger or more knowledgeable Christian to receive the weaker or less knowledgeable Christian. Paul taught that in matters of opinions and personal judgments, Christians are to neither judge one another nor to despise each another. (14:1-5)
 - 1. Paul defined the strong and the weak in verse 2. It is the weak who believed that he could not eat meats, a requirement not bound by the new covenant of Jesus Christ.
 - 2. There was to be no judging nor despising within the realm of personal judgments or opinions. (vs 3)
 - a. The brother who believed that he could eat meat was not to despise the brother who could not eat meats.
 - (1) despise - “to make of no account, despise utterly” (Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon)

- (2) ASV - “set at nought”
 - (3) NASV - “regard with contempt”
 - b. The brother who believed that he could not eat meat was not to judge the brother who could eat meats.
 - (1) judge - “. . . 5) to judge 5a) to pronounce an opinion concerning right and wrong . . . 5b) to pronounce judgment, to subject to censure . . .” (Ibid.)
 - (2) The weak brother was not to accuse the strong brother of wrong doing when eating meats was not wrong.
 - 3. We must remember that in matters of personal judgment and opinions, God supports any Christian who stands up for his conviction. (vs 4-5)
- B. In matters of personal judgement and opinions, a person may do something or refrain from doing something, all in the name of serving the Lord. (14:6-9)
- 1. We must remember that the Christian who is standing for his convictions in matters of personal judgment and opinions is doing so in order to serve God. (vs 6-8)
 - a. If a person believes that he is bound not to do something, then he refrains from the action in order to stay faithful to the Lord.
 - b. If a person believes that he is loosed to do something, then he can engage in the deed while still remaining faithful to the Lord.
 - 2. Jesus died for all mankind. Every person who has obeyed the Gospel’s call to salvation has been saved because Jesus Christ died and lived again. (vs 9)
 - a. The person who is bound by personal judgments was saved by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 - b. The person who is loosed by his personal judgments was saved by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- C. Since all faithful Christians are equal in the sight of God and will answer only to God, we must not, therefore, judge or show contempt for a brother in Christ in matters of personal judgment and opinions. (14:10-12)
- 1. Since we all will stand before the judgment seat of Christ, we must neither judge nor despise one another when we differ in matters of personal judgment or opinions. (vs 10-12)
 - a. The Greek word used for “despise” in verse 3 is the same word translated in verse 10 as “set at nought.” (KJV)

- b. All faithful Christians will be judged by the same words of Jesus. If Jesus did not teach that a particular deed was wrong, then we must not judge a brother for doing that which there is no scripture showing the deed to be wrong.

II. CHRISTIANS ARE TO SEEK TO EDIFY EACH OTHER. (Romans 14:13-23)

- A. Christians are to allow their love to take into consideration the personal judgments and opinions of their fellow Christians. We should do nothing to cause a person to violate that which they believe to be wrong. (14:13-17)
 1. In matters of personal judgment and opinion, we must determine not to cause our brother to stumble. (vs 13)
 2. Paul knew by inspiration that there was nothing unclean. However, if a brother believed something to be unclean, then to that brother it was unclean. (vs 14)
 3. If a brother willingly went against a weaker brother's personal judgment, knowing that knowledge of such action would cause the brother to grieve, then the stronger brother did not show love to the weaker brother. There is much more to the kingdom of God than eating and drinking. We should look out for the spiritual welfare of all Christians. (vs 15-19)
- B. Christians are to seek to edify other Christians. We are to build each other up, not destroy or tear down. (19-23)
 1. Christians should work to have peace within the local body, working to edify or to build each other up. (vs 19-21)
 2. A Christian's foremost duty is to seek please God, not the brethren. (vs 22-23)
 - a. If a person could eat the meat without condemning himself, then happy is that man.
 - b. However, if a person violated his personal judgment just to please someone else, then he would be guilty of having violated his own personal judgment.
 - c. If a person believes something to be wrong, then to him it is wrong until he believes otherwise.

III. THE STRONG ARE TO PUT THE SPIRITUAL NEEDS OF THE WEAK ABOVE THEIR OWN DESIRES. (15:1-6)

- A. The strong ought to bear with the "scruples of the weak." The strong should not seek to please his own self at the expense of the other Christian's weakness. A Christian's

goal should be to edify or build up his fellow Christians. (15:1-2)

- B. As was prophesied, Jesus set the example by not seeking to please Himself, but instead, He died on the cross for the sins of man. (15:3-4)
- C. God desires all Christians to follow the example of Jesus. By so doing, there would, therefore, be no divisions within the local body of Christians. (14:5-6)
 - 1. By following the example of Jesus, Christians will, with one mind and one mouth, glorify God.
 - 2. If Christians understand the difference between personal judgments and the written word of God, then the congregation will be of one mind. This being the case, there will be no divisions over matters of personal judgment.

CONCLUSION.

- A. The best way to resolve problems based upon personal judgments or opinions is by:
 - 1. Study the word of God with the intent to improve your belief, not prove your belief. By so doing, you will be open minded and more readily to accept what the Bible does or does not say.
 - 2. Love your brother enough to put either their strength of knowledge or weakness of knowledge above your personal judgments or opinions.
 - 3. Follow the example set by Jesus Christ who put the spiritual well being of others above His own physical comfort and well being.
- B. When matters of doctrine are challenged, then we must stand in righteous judgment of the error, but only because God has already judged that situation through his word. However, we must do so in love.

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