

Sermon Notes on "Guidelines for Practicing Unity and Liberty" Romans 1-23 (Part 2) /
Review of Part 1

* Paul addresses two kinds of believers: the "weak in faith" (14:1-2, 15:1) and the "strong" (15:1)

* The "weak" (primarily Jewish believers) need to grow in maturity in understanding their liberty in Christ and avoid judging the "strong".

* The "strong" (primarily Gentile believers) need to grow in how they practice their liberty with sensitivity toward others and avoid looking down on the "weak".

*Paul teaches us 6 guidelines about protecting our unity and practicing liberty in Christ.

1. Receive one another in spite of your non-essential differences (14:1a, 3b; 15:7)

* The word "accept" (used 3 times in our text: v. 1, 3, 15:7) isn't about tolerating someone who disagrees with you, but about receiving and welcoming someone into your life as a friend.

* The weakness of "the weak in faith" is NOT about trusting Christ as Savior (v. 3-"God has accepted him"), but not fully understanding the teaching ("the faith") about a believer's liberty in Christ (no food restrictions-Mark 7:19/Acts 10:13-15)

* Receive and accept one another because "God has accepted him" (14:3; 15:7)

2. Restrain yourself from making foolish judgments (14:1b-4, 13)

* There are two basic kinds of judgments:

o Righteous judgments need to address clear commands that requires critical thinking and discrimination between the true and false, right and wrong (Matt. 7:3-6; Jn. 7:24)

o Unrighteous judgments are those that focus on appearances (Jn. 7:24), motives (Matt. 7:1) and non-essentials (Rom. 14:1b-4, 10)

3. Respect each other's faith conviction (14:5, 14, 22-23)
 - * Not all faith convictions are equally respected (those that violate clear commands and essential doctrines of the faith)
 - * Some faith convictions should be equally respected (those that are believed and practiced as personal convictions on non-essential matters that are not forbidden or commanded by God)

4. Recognize your common and centered motivation (14:6-9)
 - * Two phrases soften our differing convictions and unify us in the midst of those differences ("for the Lord" used 4x in v. 6, 8 and "gives thanks to God" used 2x in v. 6)
 - * Two things should drive our life and choices:
 - * The common motivation of the Lordship of Christ (14:6-7): We are here to live for the Lord (2 Cor. 5:9; 1 Cor. 10:31) and give thanks to Him (1 Cor. 15:57), not ourselves (v. 7; 2 Cor. 5:15).
 - * The centered motivation of the Lordship of Christ (14:8b-9): We've been created, purchased and possessed by the Lord because He is Lord of all.

5. Remember your future and final accountability (14:10-12)
 - * It's not about your personal assessments (Paul is not addressing matters of sin or doctrinal error, but non-essentials where God has not given a command)
 - * Paul's rebuke (in the form of "Why are you" questions in v. 10) is designed to chastise both the "weak" (who tend to want to condemn the "strong's" practice of their liberty) and the "strong" (who tend to treat the "weak" with "contempt" because of their man-made legalistic thinking).
 - * Both are wrong and both are chastised and both are part of the same forever family ("your brother")
 - * It's all about God's performance review (v. 10b: "we will all stand before"; v. 12: "each one of us will give an account")

* Every believer will be evaluated (not condemned, but assessed for rewards or loss (1 Cor. 3:10-15; 2 Cor. 5:10)

* Both the believer's judgment and the unbeliever's judgment are based upon works (as works reveal the evidence of saving or non-saving grace in our lives).

6. Regulate your liberty with love (14:13-23)

* In the section, Paul primarily addresses the "strong" and uses love (v. 15) as a guiding principle for how liberty is practiced in the presence of the "weak".

* Love thinks more about others than about ourselves.

* Love doesn't focus on personal rights, but personal responsibility

* Love is willing to limit its liberty for God, others and self.

* There are 12 regulating filters that fit under three categories (love for God, others, self) that will help you practice your liberty joyfully and responsibly in Christ

1. Let your love for GOD be a regulating filter (5 questions to ask).

1. The exaltation filter: Will this bring glory and honor to God when I do it? (Rom. 14:6-9; 1 Cor. 10:31)

2. The explanation filter: Will I be able to explain my liberty choice on the day of judgment? (Rom. 14:10-12)

3. The essence filter: Will this keep the main thing the main thing about the primary essence of the faith (the kingdom) versus the secondary externals of the faith? (Rom. 14:17-18)

4. The emulation filter: Will this emulate what Christ would do and help me or my brother/sister to be more like Him? (1 John 2:6; Rom. 8:29)

5. The evil filter: Will this have the appearance "of evil" that could dishonor and disgrace God? (1 Thess. 5:22; Rom. 12:2)

2. Let your love for OTHERS be a regulating filter.

1. The example filter: Will my participation cause my brother or sister to stumble? (Rom. 14:13, 15, 20-21; 1 Cor. 8:9-13; 10:27-29)
2. The edification filter: Will this build my brother or sister up in the faith and help them grow in Christ? (Rom. 14:19; 1 Cor. 10:24)
3. The evangelism filter: Will this enhance my testimony and point others to Jesus Christ? (Rom. 14:16; 1 Cor. 9:19-23; 10:33)

3. Let your love for YOURSELF be a regulating filter.

1. The encroachment filter: Will this violate my faith conviction in Christ? Do I have any doubts? (Rom. 14:5, 14, 22-23)
2. The excess filter: Do I really need to do this? Will this slow me down spiritually? (Heb. 12:1; 1 Cor. 6:12a: "all things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable")
3. The enslavement filter: Will this form a habit that does not honor God? (1 Cor 6:12b: "but I will not be mastered by anything")
4. The equivocation filter: Is this really just an excuse or cover-up to feed a fleshly desire? (1 Peter 2:16)