

Learning and Living the Bible Together

Romans 14:1-15:13

As we begin chapter 14, Paul confronts the issue of Christian liberty and it's impact on church unity. How do we handle people in the church with different convictions?

> Who are the weak and the strong?

- The weak in the faith. They struggle with liberty. (14:1)
 - * Not fully free to do some actions that are not violating Scripture.
 - * Vulnerable to being judgmental or legalistic.
- The strong. They are free to do certain action and have a clear conscience. (15:1)
 - * Free to do actions that do not violate Scripture but may offend some.
 - * Vulnerable to being judgmental, arrogant, or faking into sin due to liberty
- Neither are living in sin by these specific actions. Actions are driven by conscience.

> 14:1-12 — Direction to the church

- Accept the one struggling with liberty. (14:1)
- Do not pass judgment on one another. (14:1)
- Respect the convictions of one another. (14:2-3)
- Remember the Lord accepts each of them because they are not in sin. (14:3-4)
- People have to operate according to their convictions in their heart. (14:5, 22)
- We are not to judge but trust the Lord for judgment. (14:6-12)

> 14:13-15:13 — More direction and application to the church

- By exercising liberty, we are not to cause our brother or sister to stumble. We cannot, by our actions, lead someone else to sin or cause them to fall away from the faith. (14:13)
- Do not hurt or destroy another due to your actions of liberty. Walk in love. We can be judgmental, exclude others, gossip about others, be insensitive to feelings of others, or just selfish. (14:14-15)
- Do not do anything that harms your witness and walk for the kingdom of God. (14:16-21)
 - * Focus on what it really important. (vv. 17,19,20)
- Encourage one another and direct your actions toward serving Christ.

- To the strong, live by your convictions and do not call something sin when you know it is not. Choose to avoid activity due to love and service but be clear on what is sin. (14:22)
- To the weak, do not change actions unless you have clarity from your walk with God about what is right and wrong. (14:23)
- Lay aside yourself and your desires for the sake of others. (15:1-2)
 - Build up one another for the cause of Christ
- Follow the example of Jesus who laid aside Himself (15:3)
- Look to and learn from the Scriptures. Remember eternity. Stand firm. Have joy in what is important. (15:4; 5:2-5)
- Be unified. Look to Jesus. Glorify Him. (15:5-6)
- Accept one another in Christ. Remember God accepted you. (15:7-13)
 - God sacrificed for you. So should we for one another.
 - Put your focus and attention upon Him and not on minor, temporal things.

What if I feel liberty to do something? What should I do?

- * Ensure you are Biblical. Liberty is not a license to sin.
- * Don't exercise your liberty if your actions can do spiritual harm.
- * Ask yourself what are your intentions? Why exercise my liberty if there is risk?
- * Ask yourself, "Am I glorifying God?"

What if I do not feel free to do something that others do?

- * Check the action to see if it violates Scripture.
- * Ask yourself if you need to do this action to bring glory to God or minister for Him.

What if I have disagreement with my brother or sister? Do we just always default to the lowest level of freedom?

- * Speak truth in love to one another.
- * Encourage one another and use Scripture.
- * Ensure you do not hinder the Gospel message.
- * Have dialogue, defer to one another, and love like 1 Corinthians 13 outlines.

Where are the boundaries? What do I have freedom to do?

- * Wrong question.
- * You are asking to see what you can do (like a child seeking how far can they push the limit).
- * Ask what brings glory to Him, brings me closer to Him, and lets me be most effectively used for Him.