

Wisdom When We Differ – Part II

Romans 14.1-15.13; 1 Corinthians 8-10

When the Bible gives no command or principle in non-moral decisions, the believer is free and responsible to choose his own course of action. Any decision made within the moral will of God is acceptable to God.

The Meat Debate

This divine direction on what to do about non-commanded debate was occasioned by some specific problems that cropped up in the Church during the first century. Believers were lining up on opposite sides of issues where no definitive revelation had been received. The test case that eventually warranted apostolic comment concerned the propriety of eating meat. Most of that revelation is concentrated in Romans 14 and 15, and 1 Corinthians 8-10. Out of that issue, Paul gives us governing principles for the exercise of Christian liberty in the social context of differing opinions.

1. Learn to distinguish between matters of command and matters of freedom (14.14, 20).
- 2. On debatable issues, cultivate your own convictions (14.5).**
- 3. Allow your brother the freedom to determine his own convictions – even when they differ from yours (14.1-12).**
4. Let your liberty be limited, when necessary, by love (14.13-15.2).
5. Follow Christ as the model and motivator of servant-hood (15.3-13).

On Debatable issues, Cultivate Your Own Convictions.

The verses that follow Romans 14.5 contain several reasons why each believer needs to come to his own convictions on the debated issues.

The **first** of these is that the Christian is to lead a purposeful life (Romans 14.6, 8).

Second, each man should be fully convinced in his own mind because, "each one of us shall give account of himself to God" for the way in which we exercise our freedom and responsibility (Romans 14.11-12; Isaiah 45.23).

A **third** value of personal convictions stems from the fact that enjoyment of our Christian freedom is one of our spiritual blessings for which we thank God, (Romans 14.22, 6, 23).

Finally, being fully convinced permits one to be responsible for convictions that are truly his own – it keeps him from being held hostage to someone else's' views on an issue, (1 Corinthians 10.29-30).

Being convinced that one should be convinced in his own mind about debatable issues, the thoughtful reader of Paul's explanation raises a question: How does one go about developing his own convictions?

First, one must adopt the proper life-focus (Romans 14.8).

Second, it is important to ask the right questions. Several good ones are suggested by Paul's discussion in 1 Corinthians 10.23-11.1.

Allow Your Brother the Freedom to Determine His Own Convictions – Even When They Differ From Yours.

In this segment, Paul actually argues for two related principles which, taken together, provide the basis for the summary statement recorded above.

The **first** of these is the ***principle of acceptance*** (Romans 14.1, 3, 5, 10; 15.7).

To support the concept of acceptance, Paul adds the ***principle of accountability*** (Romans 14.11-12).