

Wisdom When We Differ – Part III

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).**

Let Your Liberty be Limited, When Necessary, by Love.

*“You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, **serve one another in love.**” Galatians 5.13*

Some Essential Definitions

A **weaker brother** is a Christian who, because of the weakness of his faith, knowledge, conscience, and will, can be influenced to sin against his conscience by the example of a differing stronger brother.

The **stronger brother** is a Christian who, because of his understanding of Christian freedom and the strength of his conviction, exercises his liberty with full peace of conscience without being improperly influenced by the differing opinions of others. Romans 15.1-2; 14.14; 1 Corinthians 8.1, 4-7

A **stumbling block** is an action taken by a stronger brother which, though it would ordinarily qualify as a permissible act of freedom, influences a weaker brother to sin against his conscience. Romans 14.13, 20, 21; 1 Corinthians 8.9, 13; Matthew 16.22-23

A **Pharisee** is a professing believer with strong convictions who, because of his own pride, takes offense at those who resist his pressure to conform to his point of view. Matthew 15.1-14

Follow Christ as the Model and Motivator of Servanthood.

“Make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 2.2-3, 5