

Romans 14:1-12

Introduction

Old Order German Baptist friend, not allowed to have their own convictions regarding derby hats, water skiing, music or chrome on bumpers—conformity in all aspects

1. The Bible is clear on a lot of things...more clear than a many Christians want to accept
2. However, there are plenty of every day practical life-things that the Bible doesn't address directly
3. You may have heard the following phrase (or any number of its variations): "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things charity"
 - a. It's often attributed to Augustine but there's no record in any of his writings indicating that it originated with him or was ever used by him
 - b. The earliest form comes from a German author from the 1600s
 - c. The sentiment of the phrase is this:
 - 1) There are certain things (e.g. doctrines spelled out clearly in the Scriptures) that we should all agree on that build unity
 - 2) There are other things (e.g. those things not spelled out directly in the Scriptures) that we should be free to disagree on
 - 3) And finally, that in both we should be charitable
4. Up to this point, Paul has been instructing us on what it means to present our lives as living sacrifices to God, by refusing to be conformed to the world and instead be transformed in our way of thinking and behavior
 - a. In chapters 14 and 15 (1-12 or 13) he provides instruction on how to handle differences within the body of Christ when it comes to matters of conscience or conviction
 - b. Today we will look at the first 12 verses of chapter 14 where Paul addresses the attitudes we are to have toward one another when dealing with such things
 - c. Next week we will look at the 14:13-23 verses where Paul will address our behavior when dealing with these differences
 - d. Finally, two weeks from now we will look at 15:1-12(or 13) which will give some final broad instructions regarding how to maintain unity in the body (primarily the reason—that Christ accepted both Jews and Gentiles)

A. When it comes to matters of conscience or conviction, we are to accept rather than judge another (14:1-4)

1. In this passage, Paul addresses two different groups of people: those who are "**weak in faith**" and those who are strong in faith (Paul doesn't use that phrase until 15:1)
 - a. Those who are strong in faith are those who understand the freedom they have from ritualistic religious practices like those found in the OT (2a): "**One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only.**"
 - b. Those who are "**weak in faith**" believe they are still bound by ritualistic religious practice, like believing that certain foods are off-limits (2b): "**but he who is weak eats vegetables only.**"

- c. What Paul addresses here is not a matter of Christian doctrine—right vs. wrong—but a matter of individual conscience or conviction based on theological understanding and maturity—Peter is a good example (Acts 10:1-16)
 - d. In 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 and 10:23-33 (read these) Paul deals with this very topic of meat-eating and declares that it is a matter of conscience (not doctrine):
 - 1) The meat sold in the Greco-Roman marketplaces was generally sacrificed to idols before it was sold
 - 2) The concern by some Christians was that eating such meat amounted to idolatry and thus constituted sin
 - 3) However, Paul explained that some Christians have more “knowledge” (e.g. a more developed understanding of Biblical truth) and recognize that other gods aren’t real, which makes idols meaningless, and therefore meat sacrificed to them no different than any other meat—these recognize the freedom/liberty we have in Christ to eat anything we want
 - 4) But, Paul also recognized that not every Christian has matured to the point where they fully understand the freedom they have in Christ, so they still feel convicted about eating the meat that’s been sacrificed to idols
 - 5) So, while Paul makes it clear that eating meat sacrificed to idols is not directly prohibited, he instructs both to eat according to their conscience, but to do so without causing others to stumble
 - e. So, this passage sets out for us how to live together in unity within the body of Christ when we have varying convictions and matters of conscience
2. Paul first challenges the more mature in the church (1-3):
- a. He calls on them to accept those who are less mature (1a): **“Now accept the one who is weak in faith,”**
 - 1) The word for accept here refers to taking in or receiving someone
 - 2) The idea is that the mature are to not only accommodate the weak, but to warmly welcome them into fellowship
 - 3) Paul uses this same word one chapter later when he calls upon us accept one another just as Christ does (15:7): **“Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.”**
 - b. He calls on them not to pass judgment on the less mature (1b): **“but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.”**
 - 1) Most translations treat this phrase as a reference to arguing or quarreling over differences of opinions which is probably right
 - 2) More literally it reads, **“accept...not into judgment of opinions”**
 - c. He calls on them not to look upon those with contempt who are less mature (3): **“The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat,”**
 - 1) To have contempt means to despise or look down upon someone
 - 2) In this case, Paul is referring to looking down upon the less theologically (?) mature because of their lack of knowledge or understanding
3. Paul then moves on to the less mature (3b-4):

- a. He calls on them not to judge the one who lives contrary to their personal convictions (3b): **“and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him.”**
 - b. He provides two reasons why judgment is unacceptable when it comes to such matters (3c-4):
 - 1) First, the one they are judging is a child of God: **“God has accepted him”**
 - 2) Second, they have no right to judge because they are not his master (4): **“Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.”**
 - a) James repeats this in James 4:12: **“There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?”**
 - b) Jesus also warned his disciples about judging one another (Matthew 7:1): **“Do not judge so that you will not be judged.”**—explain?
4. So, when it comes to matters of conscience or personal conviction, we are to accept one another rather than judge.

B. When it comes to matters of conscience or conviction, we must recognize that we all serve Jesus in those convictions (14:5-9)

- 1. Paul calls on us to allow one another to have and hold their own convictions (14:5): **“One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind.”**
 - a. Those who regard one day above another is likely a reference to Jews who believed they were required to keep the OT Sabbath and other holy days/feasts
 - b. Those who regard every day alike likely refers to Gentiles who believe strict adherence to the OT Sabbath laws are not required
 - c. As in the case of meat-eating above, Paul indicates that this is a matter of conscience or conviction:
 - 1) He doesn’t declare one to be right and the other to be wrong
 - 2) Rather, he commands (imperative) that each must simply be convinced in his own mind (5): **“Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind.”** (lit. **“Let each one in his own mind fully accomplish it.”**)
- 2. Whether we share the same opinions or not, we are all living out our convictions in service to the Lord (6-9):
 - a. The one who believes in a certain conviction or practice is serving the Lord: **“He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God;”**
 - b. Those who don’t believe or practice the same thing are also serving the Lord: **“and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God.”**
 - c. Either way, both are serving the Lord (7-9): **“For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; 8 for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s.**
 - d. Jesus is Lord and Master over both: (9): **“For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.”**
- 3. So, not only are we to not look down upon or judge one another for our differing convictions, but we are to recognize that each of us is serving the Lord by those convictions.

C. When it comes to matters of conscience or convictions, we must recognize that God is the judge, not us (14:10-12)

1. Each of us will stand before God (10): **"But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God."**
 - a. Paul already warned us about looking down upon one another, or judging one another, because of our differences of opinion or convictions, but he repeats it here.
 - b. He also wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:10: **"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."**
 - c. The reality is that we each are accountable to God and ultimately will be judged by Him, not by one another

2. Each of us will have to give our own account to God for how we lived (12): **"So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God."**
 - a. This will certainly include violating one's own conscience (doing what one believes is wrong or not doing what one believes is right—James 4:17)
 - b. But, it will also include the sin of causing others to stumble by abusing our liberty (1 Corinthians 8:9-13)

Conclusion

1. There will always be differences of opinion, or differences when it comes to our personal convictions about how we live our lives
2. When those differences involve genuine sin, we are called upon to confront one another with a desire to restore (Galatians 6:1-5; James 5:19-20)
3. However, when those differences are matters of conscience, we are called upon to accept one another, without contempt or judgment
4. We should remember that even though we may not agree on our personal convictions or matters of conscience, we are all serving the Lord
5. Finally, we must remember that each of us will stand before the Lord and give account for our own lives and actions