

## Sermon Notes on “Guidelines for Practicing Unity and Liberty” Romans 14:1-12 (Part 1)

- The church is full of many different people with different background, experiences, yet God calls us to live harmoniously even when we have differences over non-essential matters that the Lord has not forbidden or commanded.
  - Diversity in the church doesn’t automatically translate into warm, loving unity and fellowship.
  - Disputed matters regarding non-essential faith conviction and tradition can lead to strife, confusion and disharmony.
  - The gospel binds dissimilar people together into genuine unity that requires diligence to preserve that unity (Eph. 4:3) and putting on love, the perfect bond of unity (Col. 3:14).
- God wants us to enjoy our liberty in Christ in non-essential matters, yet not at the expense of unity and the spiritual well-being of others (Rom. 15:5-7)
- There are two types 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 and avoid judging the “*strong*”.
  - The “*strong*” (primarily Gentile believers) need to be loving in the practice of their liberty and avoid looking down on the “*weak*”.
- Paul teaches us 6 guidelines about practicing our unity and liberty in Christ (5 this week and 1 next week in v. 13-23)

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

- The word “*accept*” is used 3 times in our text (v. 1, 3, 15:7) is NOT about tolerating someone who differs 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, but misunderstanding the teaching (“*the faith*”) about a believer’s liberty in Christ.
- 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:**

- **Faithful judgments** need to address clear commands and that requires judgment (including self-examination that takes out the log in your eye first)
- **Foolish judgments** are those that focus on appearances, motives and non-essentials

### 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 faith)
- Some faith convictions should be equally respected (those that are believed and practiced as convictions on non-essential matters not forbidden or commanded by God)

### 4. **Recognize your common and centered motivation** (14:6-9)

- There are two phrases that soften our diverse convictions and unify us in the midst of that differences ("*for the Lord*" used 4x in v. 6, 8 and "*gives thanks to God*" used 2x in v. 6)
- Two things should be driving our life and choices:
  - The Lordship of Christ provides us with a common motivation (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 Lordship of Christ provides us with a centered motivation (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 forbidden 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 final 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 is based upon works (works reveal the evidence of saving grace or no life in Christ).**