

When Church Members Disagree

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Scripture Basic: Romans 14:1-15:13

Focal: Romans 14:1-4, 10, 13-17, 15:1-3, 7

Outline:

III. What God Expects of the Justified Man (12:1-15:13)

- A. In His Direct Relationship to God as a Human Being (12:1-2)
- B. As a Spiritually-gifted Member of the Body of Christ (12:3-8)
- C. As a Member of Society (12:9-21)
- D. In His Relationship to Civil Government (13:1-7)
- E. The Motivating Principles of Christian Conduct (13:8-14)
- F. In His Relationship to the "Weaker Brother" (14:1-15:13)

1. General statement of the problem and the principles of conduct to be observed (14:1-5)

a. The problem stated

(1) Regarding eating meat (14:2)

(2) Regarding observing special (Jewish) holy days (14:5)

b. Analysis of the merits of the 2 positions

(1) The "strong" Christian

(2) The "weak" Christian (14:1a, 2b)

c. The principles of conduct to be observed

(1) For the "strong" Christian

(a) Receive the "weaker brother" cordially into full fellowship (14:1a)

(b) Do not criticize his scruples (14:1b)

(c) Do not hold him in contempt (14:3a)

(2) For the "weak" Christian: Do not judge the "strong" Christian in the exercise of his liberty (14:3b-4)

(3) For both: Let each be fully persuaded in his own mind (14:5c)

2. Extended consideration of the principles of conduct (14:6-15:13)

a. The folly of passing judgment on matters of personal Christian liberty (14:6-13a)

b. The danger of injuring weak consciences (14:13b-15:4)

c. The responsibility of Jews and Gentiles alike to be of one mind in Christ because of the divine purpose for each group (15:5-13)

Applications:

The "weaker brother" doctrine, if conscientiously applied, would virtually eliminate petty problems in the church. Yet it seems to be almost totally unknown. Essentially it relates to our concern for the well-being of others as a priority over our own "rights". You may want to use the "King James English", the "cosmetics" and/or the "mixed bathing" examples in your class. In addition, select issues that may be current bones of contention in your own church, and apply the doctrine. Movies? Sunday observance? Dress? Music? Remember that this doctrine applies only in the "gray" areas, i.e. areas where the Word of God has no specific teaching.