

The Chapel Bulletin



CLEARCREEK
CHAPEL

Christian Liberty

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*S*avoring the *S*upremacy of *G*od
*S*tudying the *W*ord of *G*od
*S*haping the *P*eople of *G*od
*S*preaching the *G*ospel of *G*od

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Introduction

How do Christians respond to varying views on what is right and wrong on things the Bible does not address directly or appears ambiguous on? Some respond with establishing standards and convictions which erect fences far away from any approach to sin. Others respond by enforcing only the Biblical demands and then try to work out one's own practice as they see it. It does not take long for both responses to become polarized over an issue.

Take the Biblical argument over eating meat purchased at the cut-rate butcher shop operated by the pagan temples. Some felt that it was a serious compromise to be seen entering and purchasing that meat. Others simply saw it as a frugal way to put meat on the table and were largely unconcerned about the fact that this meat was once part of idol sacrifice.

Take the modern discussion over any number of issues: length of one's hair, men wearing an earring, attending movies or almost any discussion of music in the church. These are issues where our backgrounds, religious or pagan upbringing, the culture around us and our first experiences as a Christian have molded our thinking.

Now, the problem and polarization is unavoidable. And if I understand the Bible correctly, it may even be desirable in the context of a community of believers who understand the concepts governing Christian liberty. This study is dedicated to that end.

I must be very clear on one fact. Where the Bible is clear in its precepts, we are to be obedient. The matters of holiness have commands in the Scripture directing us into a godly walk. These are not the issues over which liberty have control. One cannot plead liberty of conscience in order to avoid a clear Bible command. To do so is to turn our liberty in license. As one of my mentors once pointed out, you cannot always tell where the ocean begins and the shore ends due to the shifting tides and rolling waves—but you always know when you are on dry beach or in over your head.

May God give us grace to know how to stand where the waves roll and the tides shift.

Introduction to Christian Liberty

Romans 14:1-15:6

Introduction This text is dense with logic, illustrations, principles and practices. Almost sentence by sentence, Paul develops his argument with a tightly woven fabric. The best approach to this is to get a sense of its general structure and then to deal with specifics by carrying on a dialog with the text. We want its sense and then its specifics.

Getting the Big Picture

Vertical Dimension of Christian Liberty (v.1-12)

The focus is on how our relationship to God governs our liberty. Paul's argument turns on the following:

The command to accept one another because God has accepted us.

The concept that we are accountable to God because God is our master and Lord.

Horizontal Dimension of Christian Liberty (v.13-21)

The focus is on how our relationship to one another governs our liberty. Paul's argument turns on the following:

The commands not to tear down the people or the work of God because we are brothers in the faith.

The concept that the Kingdom of God is rooted primarily in character, not in convictions.

Inward Dimension of Christian Liberty (v.22-23)

The focus is on how our faith governs our liberty. Paul's argument turns on the following:

The conviction that matters of conscience are between me and God.

The concept that faith without doubt must govern our convictions.

The Outward Dimension of Christian Liberty (15:1-6)

The focus is on how our love governs our liberty. Paul's argument turns on the following:

The command to please one another because of the need for edification and unification.

The concept of the primacy of the example of Christ's sacrifice and the instruction of Scripture.

The conclusion that all is done so that the diversity of views blends together in a symphonic harmony of glory to God.

Digging into Details

Let's sort out the details of the passage by carrying on a dialog with the text.

Who are the two groups of people in this passage? How does Paul refer to them?

Fill in the chart as we go through the questions.

Strong in faith	Weak in faith
eats everything including meat	eats only vegetables and fruit
honors special religious days	sees all days as the same
? OK drinking	wine ? not OK
look down with contempt for living such a narrow life	judge others for their lack of standards

What is the responsibility of the whole congregation?

To accept the one who is weak in faith

In accepting one another, what are we to guard against?

Passing judgment on their opinions, disputing over these areas.

Why does he use the word *opinions*?

Because those who have strong convictions in these areas have opinions, not doctrines. Paul is purposefully distinguishing between doctrine which is non-negotiable and opinions which are.

What two areas were under dispute in the church at Rome (in fact, in many of the churches of the day)? Match them up with their respective groups.

The issue of eating meat versus vegetarianism and the issue of a religious calendar or holidays.

What are the tendencies of each group?

The strong look down on the weak and the weak judge the strong.

What are we supposed to do about it?

Do not do it. If you are free in your conscience, do not look down on those who have many standards and convictions. If you have many convictions, you must not judge those who do not live by the same standards. (Remember, we are not talking about our obligations.)

Why are we supposed to accept one another when it comes to these issues?

Because Christ has accepted us. The essence of the argument here is that we have been accepted as one while maintaining diversity. The Bible seeks after unity and uniformity.

To whom are we NOT accountable in areas of liberty? To whom are we accountable? Why?

Not accountable to one another. We are accountable to the Lord. We are not one another's master and slave. We are servants to the Lord because He is the Lord. There will come a day when we will give an account in these areas to the Lord. The Lord is the lord of our conscience and convictions, not other believers.

What does it mean to "cause a brother to stumble?" or "to put an obstacle in his way?"

Does not mean to offend or cause the brother to be upset about what we are doing. This results in binding everyone's conscience to the one who has the weakest faith (narrowest convictions).

It does mean that we are not to encourage someone to violate their own conscience. We are not to exercise our freedom so that others are encouraged or emboldened to violate their convictions (1 Cor. 8:9-10).

What does verse 14 mean?

The "right or wrong" of things not ruled on by the Bible is determined by the faith and conscience of the one who must decide whether to do or not to do for himself.

What principle is to guide us when our convictions rub against another's (and not having a conviction about something is still a conviction)?

Walking according to the principle of love.

What two commands in verses 15 & 20 come from this principle in verse 15?

Do not destroy the people of God (v.15)

Do not destroy the work of God (v.20)

What does Paul mean by verse 16?

Those who have a conviction or convictions about these areas must not be allowed to dictate those to the whole by making those things evil for everyone. Just because you have a conviction about jazz does not mean that makes it wrong for everyone.

Why is the doctrinal statement in verses 17-18 important in this argument?

First, the relationship we have as believers is grounded in our internal union by the Spirit not in external, visible uniformity.

Second, the governance of the church is not in the areas of what or what not to eat or drink, but in the spheres of righteousness, peace and joy.

Third, the essence of God's kingdom consists of Holy Spirit produced character, not in personal preferences of conduct.

When does something which we believe is OK become wrong for us? (v.20b)

When as a result someone will be encouraged to sin by doing something they believe is wrong. Example: If you believe that drinking wine is wrong, we would not serve it to you at our house for dinner. And it is one of the reasons we do not

serve it at communion. Now that may startle you, but the drinking of wine is an area under liberty (v.21).

What two cautions emerge from verse 22?

Be sure that your belief is a conviction that will stand before God

Be sure that you do not condemn yourself in what you approve.

What role does doubt and faith (belief) have in the convictions we hold?

It is determinative. We are to live by our convictions. We are to base our convictions on Biblical teaching (that is why this is called faith). And we are not to do things we have doubts about. For in the areas of liberty, if we violate our convictions or conscience, we sin.

What are we to make every effort to do?

What will lead to peace between Christians in the church and what will build up Christians in their faith.

How does 15:1-3 flesh this out?

We are to please others and not ourselves. Imagine in all these areas if we just followed this principle. We followed our convictions, we allow others their freedom, we encourage others to follow their convictions, we teach one another the basis for our convictions and we work hard at pleasing our brothers and sisters in Christ.

What two motivations does Paul use to close this discussion?

The Scriptures are given to instruct us and in studying them we are given endurance and encouragement.

We exist, individually and corporately to bring glory to Christ.

Developing the Guidelines

The following principles can be gleaned from this text.

- We must develop convictions for ourselves based on the Bible and live by them.
- We must accept others whose convictions are different from us.
- We must, by word and deed, encourage others to live by their convictions.
- We must never pressure someone to violate their convictions. We must acknowledge other's convictions in our fellowship with one another.
- We must not hold others hostage to our convictions. We must allow them to exercise their liberty even while we are following our convictions.
- We must not judge those who do not hold our own convictions and we must not look down on those whose convictions are narrower than our own.
- We must bend every effort to give up our own rights and work to please other Christians.

Observations in the Light of the Principles

- As in all but a very few areas, this is not a matter for a democratic vote. This is a time where the majority rule actually will violate the Scripture.
- It is also not a matter for policy. The elders should not legislate in these areas. These are not matters for church governance.
- It is the responsibility of the elders to bring these principles to bear on issues in the congregation. Just as in Romans 14-15 and in 1 Corinthians 8, Paul taught these principles and then outlined how to practice these principles, so we have a parallel responsibility.

Now, let us do just that.

Personalizing the Principles

There is some interesting discussion and debate among good Christian people about responding to musical ministry and specials by applause. Listen to how liberty applies to that issue.

4:1 Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on whether applause is right or wrong. 2 One man's faith allows him to applaud, but another man, whose faith is weak, does not applaud. 3 The man who claps must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not clap must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him. 4 Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

5 One man considers applause dishonoring to God; another man considers all responses to be the same. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 ... He who claps, does it the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who does not, says AMEN to the Lord and gives thanks to God. 7 For none of us lives to himself alone

and none of us dies to himself alone. 8 If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.

9 For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living. 10 You, then, why do you judge your brother who claps? Or why do you look down on your brother who doesn't? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. 11 It is written: "As surely as I live," says the Lord, "every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God."

12 So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.

13 Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way. 14 As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced that applause is not wrong in itself. But if anyone regards it as wrong, then for him it is wrong to clap. 15 If your brother is harmed because of your applause, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your clapping destroy your brother for whom Christ died. 16 Do not allow what you consider good, that is applause in response to specials, to be spoken of as evil. 17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of clapping or not, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, 18 because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.

19 Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. 20 Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of applause. Applause is OK, but it is wrong for a man to respond in such a way that causes someone else to violate their conscience. 21 It is better not to clap or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall by doing what he believes is wrong.

22 So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves. 23 But the man who has doubts is condemned if he claps, because his applause is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.

5:1 We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. 2 Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. 3 For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me." 4 For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

5 May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, 6 so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Instruction on Christian Liberty

1 Corinthians 8

Introduction When we come to the topic of Christian liberty, we must underscore the fact that no particular text stands alone. The proper and Biblical exercise of liberty involves an understanding of all the major texts involved. We studied together the Romans 14-15 text last week. The manuscript from that study is available on the Chapel Web Site. Now we are going to consider the three chapters Paul devotes to liberty in the Book of 1 Corinthians.

Now, let go back with me into the first century to the church gathered in Corinth. Here is a church whose self-perception is of marked spirituality, deep knowledge of the Word, powerful expressions of ministry, openness and tolerance. The truth is that the church was carnal, divided and cliquish, self-absorbed, tolerating of sin, misusing and misrepresenting spiritual gifts and legalistic on peripheral issues. In the midst of their mess, chaos and confusion, the church wrote to Paul seeking his counsel on many issues.

The issues they spoke of echo in our culture in different ways. If we are not careful, the truth and applications of the text will be left in the mists of obscurity leaving us to repeat the mistakes they made. So, we will need to exposit the passage in its context, to develop principles from which we make application for our place in redemptive history.

The Mutual Concern

(v.1-3)

Paul's approach to this problem makes it evident that the Corinthians were dealing with symptoms and not diseases. They were concerned with buying meat. Paul is concerned with more primary and basic issues.

Introduces the Subject

(v.1a)

One of the issues they were concerned about seems almost incomprehensible to us today. You see, there were two ways to buy meat in their day. You could go to the open market and purchase your meat there. Or you could go to the smaller markets run by the pagan temples. Now the price at the temple markets was much lower due to the fact that the meat being sold had once been part of an offering to a pagan deity or idol. Many Christians went to the temple meat market to purchase their meat. Many Christians felt that was sin in that it was a compromise of their standards. How would people know if they were there to buy meat or worship at the temple? And is not the meat contaminated by the use it has been put to? This was the question before them.

Quotes their Letter**(v.1b)**

The quote is “we know that we all have knowledge.”

In their letter they spoke to a number of issues by way of statements and questions, which Paul quotes back to them in his response. (Part of our problem today is that reading the book of 1 Corinthians is somewhat like hearing one side of a telephone call.)

In other words, the Corinthians are in essence saying that those who are saying we should not buy our meat at the temple market ought to know better. We all have a shared knowledge about this thing.

Evaluates their Attitude**(v.2-3)**

The (ESV) captures this very well, “This ‘knowledge’ puffs up, but love builds up.”

Now why does he say this to them? Paul, who is often deeply concerned about the ignorance of Christians, is here seemingly concerned about the dangers of knowledge. Well, those dangers are very real. Paul is not saying that we are not to seek knowledge, but rather we must be carefully evaluating ourselves to see if *knowledge gained is elevating self-importance*. In fact, the bottom line (if I may pre-empt the study a bit) is that they were using right knowledge and doctrine in wrong ways.

Galatians 5:6 reflects the principle of this passage. Paul writes, “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.” In other words, the mark of true Christians is faith—(a body of belief or seeing with our understanding the reality of spiritual truths)—going to work in the sphere of or in the factory of love.

The strongest evidence, according to verse 2, that a person does not know what he ought to know is when he thinks he knows everything he needs to. What is needed is a love for God which affirms, not that we have arrived in our knowledge, but that God knows us.

The Majestic Concepts**(v.4-6)**

These verses are recognized by most scholars as a creedal summary of a larger body of teaching.

The Evaluation of Idolatry**(v.4)**

Here again, he seems to be quoting them. There are two propositions here:

- Idols have no objective reality in the world. In essence, idols are material representations of spiritual illusions. They are the smoke and mirrors of error.
- There is only one God. This is asserting that God is not like Zeus, who is the chief among a pantheon of gods. No, God is the only God there is. The huge array of gods and goddesses represented by the statutes and idols were figment of men’s imaginations.

Paul does not leave this discussion here. Later on, he will point out that the enabling influence behind the ideas are demons.

The Exaltation of God

(v.5-6)

Paul expands on the brief statement with the intent of showing that they missed the point of asserting these truths. He establishes two categories and draws the implications from them.

- One God - The Father. Note the importance of the prepositions: *from Him* are all things and *for Him* we exist. God is our ultimate frame of reference.
- One Lord - Jesus Christ. Again note the different prepositions: *by whom* are all things and *through whom* we exist. There is only one supreme authority and that authority is upheld by the fact that He created and sustains us in our very existence.

↳ Now, why deal with this now? Why are these facts so important? Because they were the true statements of doctrine being wrongly used.

The Needed Correction

(v.7-8)

Paul shifts the focus from the mind to the conscience. The Corinthians had knowledge, but not understanding. So he goes on to expand their knowledge so as to cultivate understanding.

Understand the Role of the Conscience

(v.7)

Not everyone understands these facts the same way as you do. The role of the conscience is to pass judgment on the rightness or wrongness of choices. It is never to be used to determine if something is morally right or wrong. The conscience is like logic. Logic only tells us if our argument is valid. It cannot tell us if it is true. The conscience is that voice in your soul which evaluates right and wrong and then accuses us establishing guilt. "Let your conscience be your guide" usually is too late. Now, does this contradict what we said last week about not violating our conscience? No, it means that our conscience responds to what we believe to be true. Further, Paul's point here is that the *can be weakened by being defiled*. In other texts, the conscience *can be callused by constant exposure to sin*.

Because of their past experience with the pagan temples and the idolatry, their conscience is defiled by the weakness of thinking of the food as having been offered to idols. Their conscience is like the old computer screens which bore the lasting imprint of images left on them.

Understand the Unimportance of Food

(v.8)

Second, they must come to grips with the fact our relationship with God is not enhanced or destroyed by what we eat. There is an interesting play in words here. The food they were arguing over had been presented to an idol in order for the worshipper to be accepted by the idol. They were concerned that the food they were arguing over was preventing them from being accepted by God. It does not matter whether you eat or do not eat the foods under discussion.

In other words, because of their past, their conscience is saying something is wrong which is not sinful in and of itself.

The Loving Caution (v.9-12)

Paul says that they had better be careful. No one (on both sides of the issue) was to assume that they could proceed ahead without some careful consideration of the consequences.

The Exhortation (v.9)

Be careful that the exercise of your rights does not cause another to stumble. The word freedom or liberty here might better be rendered *right*.

The Explanation of the Consequences (v.10-12)

Paul points to what can happen when we insist on the full exercise of our rights and liberties.

- Weaker Christians may be encouraged to violate their conscience by the example we set.
- Your knowledge will then be used to destroy the weaker Christian. Here is right doctrine used in the wrong way.
- You sin against Christ when you callously ignore the spiritual condition of weaker Christians. In other words, horizontal violations of love for Christians become vertical transgression of righteousness of Christ.

So, if all this is true, then what?

The Proper Conclusion (v.13)

Paul here commits himself to not eating. It is an inevitable conclusion, is it not? If the issue causes by brother to stumble—that is to do something which violates his conscience, then I resolve not to do it ever again. See the flow? Problem → Promise → Purpose

There is a sense in which Paul is indulging in over-statement here. He is, in a way, playing to the tendency of the Corinthians to over state and over respond to everything. But we still get the point.

- Conclusion**
- When we cause weaker Christians to violate their conscience on the grounds of superior knowledge:
 - We ruin someone Christ has redeemed
 - We sin against Christ our ruler.
 - Here are a series of **errors** and **self-justifications** we must guard against.
 - My knowledge of the truth gives me the right to do anything that is not sin.
 - I am not responsible for others response to my liberty.
 - Christian individualism and independence are positive and desirable traits.
 - Do some self-examination:
 - How do I feel about my rights (liberties) as a Christian?
 - Which concerns me more: protecting my rights or preserving another's purity?
 - In what areas may my conscience be defiled and therefore needs to be purified and retrained?
 - In what areas am I using truth or doctrine in a wrong way?

Notes

Illustration of Liberty

1 Corinthians 9

Introduction How quickly it is for us to move from this is my “freedom” to this is my “right.” As we learn of our liberty in Christ and enter into the joy of not being under law, we must guard against the development of a subtle temptation. The temptation is that what I am free to do now becomes my right to do, regardless. When freedom becomes rights, then conflict and division are almost sure to follow.

In an almost strange turn, some at the church in Corinth were challenging Paul’s apostolic authority because he had given up a right for the sake of the gospel. So, having laid down some key principles on Christian Liberty, Paul now shows how he understands these principles to operate in relation to his own ministry. Particularly, Paul is concerned with the financial support of those in vocational Christian service.

The Right to Receive Support (v.1-14)

Paul develops a series of arguments to show why those serving the Lord should be supported by those who are being served. It particularly relates to the apostles, but has broader applications in the larger scope of ministry.

The Prerogatives of Apostolic Office (v.1-6)

Paul uses this opportunity to not only show the necessity for supporting those laboring in the ministry, but to defend his own apostleship.

Defense of His Apostolic Office (v.1-2)

Carefully note the second phrase. Paul asserts that he has seen “Jesus our Lord.” The wording here is unusual. In fact, Paul uses the name *Jesus* very rarely and usually to refer to Him in His Incarnation. So Paul says, “That I am an apostle is proven by the fact that I have seen the Lord in His physical, but resurrected body.” The church at Corinth seems to be challenging the Apostleship of Paul on these grounds. We can challenge the so-called modern apostleship on the same grounds. Note that his apostleship operates “in the Lord”. If he was not an apostle to any one else, he should be to the Corinthians for he founded the church there.

Development of His Apostolic Privileges (v.3-6)

He lists privileges:

- To the most basic subsistence. We have a right to eat don’t we?
- To the common practice of the apostles. Peter, the brothers of Jesus and the rest of the apostles all have wives (and it is implied that they traveled with them in ministry).
- To the unity of Paul and Barnabas with the rest. Paul and Barnabas are not exceptions to the general rule, are they?

He has the right to be supported because he has a vocational ministry as an apostle.

The Practice of Human Experience (v.7-8a)

Just by observing what people do in their ordinary lives we see that those who labor in a field are expected to be supported by their labor. No soldier pays his own way. Every farmer and shepherd expects to be provided for from his vocation.

In the first part of verse 8, Paul recognizes the non-authoritative nature of his arguments so far. Very few held apostolic office and human experience is not a sure or reliable guide on spiritual matters.

He has the right to be supported because it is the nature of the way things are to be supported by one's vocation.

The Principles of Scriptural Teaching (v.8b-12)

A question we might ask is simply, "Why go back to this text?" The answer lies on Paul's wanting to drive home that the care and concern God demanded when it came to the simple beasts of labor, certainly should not be withheld from people, much less God's servants.

He has the right to be supported because it reflects the care of God and God's people.

The Provision of Priestly Needs (v.13)

Paul shows that the pattern of vocational ministry being supported by those ministered to goes all the way back to the Old Testament Temple. The priests were supported by the tithes and the (literally) offerings of the people. They brought in their wealth and their sacrifices. Many of the sacrifices allowed the priests portions of what was being offered.

He has the right to be supported because it was the principle in the Old covenant as well.

The Precepts of Jesus' Direction (v.14)

Paul argues from Matthew 10:10 where Jesus sends the 12 out into the neighboring areas to proclaim the kingdom. In doing so, they were not to raise all kinds of money or to take along personal wealth, but rather to be supported by those to whom they were preaching.

He has the right to be supported because Jesus taught it and commanded it in His own ministry.

But now that he has firmly grounded his defense of the right to be supported, he goes on to show why he gave up that right.

The Responsibility in Refusing Support (v.15-27)

Here is the right (and it was a liberty) that Paul had. But he had chosen not enforce that right in regards to the church at Corinth.

For the Sake of the Ministry (v.15-23)

The gospel is the heart beat of Paul.

The Responsibility in Proclamation (v.15-18)

Note

A very direct translation of the Greek which captures this would read like this, “*To me it is better to die than... the boast of mine no one shall empty (shall void).*” There is a strong emotion here. Paul would rather die than, what? Receive support from the church at Corinth so that they could void his boast in not being self-supporting.

These verses are somewhat obscure in their wording and difficult in the way they are constructed. What they try to get across?

- **Support is not to treated as a way to reward the messenger.** The church is not to treat support as a reward for voluntary service. It is an obligation, but not one that Paul is expecting. He is not serving as a volunteer, but as a steward.
- **Support is not to be used as a way to manipulate the message.** Paul is a steward of Christ and his accountability for the Gospel is to God. His stewardship and obligation is to preach the gospel. His reward for not accepting support is the freedom of proclamation and the liberty from obligation it gives him.

Think about this last sentence. The (NIV) misses the full force of what Paul is saying by not translating the word gospel every time it occurs. “*What then is my reward? That when I preach the gospel, I may offer the gospel without charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.*” In other words, while the church at Corinth is concerned about wanting to exert their rights, Paul is concerned about the preaching of the gospel.

↳

Now this concern carries over in the next paragraph as Paul identifies his evangelistic strategy.

The Responsibility to People (v.19-23)

Paul gives an underlying principle on which his conduct is based. His great objective is to win the lost. To that aim, he does the following:

- To the Jews, he lives as a Jew under the Jewish law in order that he might win those who were under the Law even though he is free from Jewish Law.
- To the Gentile, he lives as a gentile without the Jewish Law, but under the Law of Christ, that he might win those who do not have the Law.
- To the weak, he lives as though his conscience were sensitive to the same issues in order to win them.

The principle is that Paul will, within the Law of Christ, culturally identify with and accommodate to his audience so as to gain the hearing of all the lost and see God save some. Paul understood that this would open himself to the criticism that he was inconsistent. But he was following the example of Christ who, in carrying out this principle in His own ministry, was accused by the Pharisees of being a drunkard and glutton.

The point Paul makes to the church at Corinth is this, “You need to give up your rights in order to edify the weaker saints; I choose to give up my rights in order to evangelize the sinners.” It is hard for us to think in these categories because, while we are concerned for edification, we have too little a concern for evangelism.

Paul did everything for the sake of the gospel so that he might be a co-participant in its reward and blessing.

For the Sake of the Minister

(v.24-27)

He has refused support for the sake of the *ministry* of the gospel. Now he turns to the *minister* of the gospel.

This discussion is carried along with an extended illustration. Paul loved athletics. He used it often in his illustrative material. (And he can be forgiven to not using soccer.) In doing so, the personal lesson is driven home with real force.

Principles for the Minister

(v.24-25)

There are two principles which Paul illustrates by an analogy to sports.

- The future objective is a prize. There is a goal toward which they were striving. The runners were all running in order to receive the prize. The prize they received was a garland or a wreath of vines and flowers which would fade and decay. But we are striving for a prize which is an incorruptible crown. The point here is that we must be involved in serving Christ *striving toward the prize of a crown in eternity*.
- The present need is self-discipline. The mark of truly great athletes is daily self-disciplines in pursuit of defined objectives. The goal of an incorruptible crown in eternity means that we discipline ourselves for ministry today. Discipline for competition, just as for ministry, means denying good things in pursuit of the better and best. It also means training, team work, enduring hardship and pain.

In my coaching of soccer, I used to tell the athletes, “Practice and training and running and drills are not meant to be fun. They are hard, grinding, laborious and sometimes boring. But they are the daily disciplines that lead to a season of victories. You will rarely rise on the playing field above the level of your work on the practice field.” It is little different in ministry. You want to serve God? You want that crown? Then today there has to be the self-discipline of training, practice, correction, and sometimes grinding, boring details. It will require giving up much in order to achieve more.

So how did Paul turn these principles into his own practice of ministry?

Practices of the Minister

- I serve in such a way as to be effective in that which I am serving. See how he says this? I do what I do in such a way as not to be out of my lane or flailing around. I strive to be effective.
- I discipline myself in such a way as to not be disqualified. How many people do we know today who were serving God in the past but have washed out by being disqualified by sin?

In an Olympics not so long ago most of these principles were clearly illustrated. The USA lost a gold medal in the 4x100 relay because an inexperienced runner was adjusting the baton in his leg. I watched two boxing matches where the wild swinging of some of the boxers cost them matches as their opponent scored on counter punches. And we saw tremendous athletes overcoming amazing obstacles through discipline and determination to achieve their prize. And many of us remember when the great British sprinter Linford Christie disgraced himself by an inappropriate response to being disqualified in the 100 meter sprint.

We must not lose sight of our overall context. Paul is addressing his rights as an office bearer in the church and his giving up those rights for the sake of the gospel. The very willingness to give up much is driven the greatness of what he was striving for. The lesson here is not to find something great to strive for. This is not a message on Christian self-motivation. The lesson here is for self-denial and self-discipline for the sake of gospel and the glory of God.

Conclusion

- The mark of the true Christian servant is one who will argue strongly for Christian liberty and then be willing to give it up for the sake of the gospel.
- The effective proclamation of the gospel is an overarching principle in liberty. We must be free to be culturally relevant so as to reach the lost with the gospel while obeying the law of Christ.
- We must identify effective strategies for evangelism. And we must do so in our own cultural milieu. Will you not begin to think with me about ways we can reach the lost in our community?
- Self-discipline and self-denial, while not the most popular topics in Christian circles today, *are essential ingredients for effective ministry.*

May God cause us to extend ourselves, give up our liberty and train with real endurance to become effective proclaimers of the gospel.

Notes

Implementation in Liberty

1 Corinthians 10

Introduction Illustration of viewing *The Night Watch* at the Rijks Museum in Amsterdam. The first impression is this is a huge painting. At a certain distance, you were just looking at a painting. Or you could walk up very close and see the jewels on the sword hilts or laces on the boot cuffs. But at just the right distance, the picture seemed to come alive. You could almost sense the figures ready to move.

That's the challenge in coming to this text. From a distance it is a huge text. At close inspection, there are details that beg for investigation. But hopefully, we find just the right place to make it come alive. We'll save jewels and boot laces for another time.

Connection At first, verses 1-13 and possibly to verse 22 seem to be a parenthesis. But the opening word construction *for* requires us to see an underlying connection to chapter 9 and a unity in the whole chapter.

- In chapter 8, Paul **instructs** the giving up of ones liberty in view of edification. There is a warning to the experienced believers to an anchoring of their knowledge in love.
- In chapter 9, Paul **illustrates** the giving up of ones liberty in view of evangelism. There is a warning to the experienced believers to an acceptance of diversity in the means of ministry.
- In chapter 10, Paul **implements** the exercise of ones liberty in view of experience. There is a warning to the experienced believers to an awareness that their liberty may lead to license.

So watch carefully how Paul develops this implementation in liberty.

The Pattern of Failure to be Avoided

(v.1-13)

The apostle begins by taking us back into the Old Testament to warn us that identifying with God's people and participating in spiritual privilege do not guarantee individual purity.

Spiritual Privileges of God's People

(v.1-4)

These were the grand spiritual privileges that the Israelites experienced. They were delivered from their slavery and their enemies by the presence of God with them and identified with Moses by passing through the sea. They participated in Christ by drinking the water and eating the manna with its spiritual, topological significance. Paul is seeing the Old Testament as salvation history and interpreting it in the light of the church's ordinances.

Sobering Problem for God's People (v.5)

If this was their privilege, why are their bodies scattered across the wilderness? In spite of all that God had done for them in visible demonstrations of His presence, provision and power, He was not pleased with them.

Sinful Practice of God's People (v.6-11)

Paul says that the recorded history of Israel is written for us to observe and learn not to imitate their sinful desires and actions. He draws on several incidents all of which were true in Corinth. The church there was guilty of the same sins that Israel had committed.

Idolatry (v.7)

Drawn from Exodus 32:6 and exposed in 1 Corinthians 8

Immorality (v.8)

Drawn from Numbers 25 and exposed in 1 Corinthians 6

Testing (v.9)

Drawn from Numbers 21 and exposed in 1 Corinthians 10:22

Grumbling (v.10)

Drawn from Numbers 16 and exposed in 2 Corinthians 12

Verse 11 reminds us forcibly that the Old Testament is profitable in powerful ways for the New Covenant believer. Israel sinned under Law and that was bad. It is even worse to sin under grace in this final age of redemptive history.

Significant Provision for God's People (v.11-13)

What does it mean for us that God's people experiencing spiritual privilege can be under God's displeasure because of their sinful practice?

Warning against Spiritual Pride (v.12)

It is just when we think that we are most secure and safe that we standing on the slipperiest ground.

Encouraging for Spiritual Purity (v.13)

This is a statement of the facts.

- No temptation is ever too strong for the believer.
- Every temptation may be escaped and endured by the believer.

So here it is. The experienced believer must understand that his very experience of spiritual privileges does not make him immune to temptation. All believers must take heart in their temptation for there is a way to avoid sin.

So, now what? How does this relate to their liberty? Well, the exercise of their liberty was tempting some to commit idolatry.

The Prohibition of Dining to be Accepted (v.14-22)

Paul carefully divides the question they have written about into two parts. Can we buy and eat meat sacrificed to idols which is being sold in the temple market? Can we go to meals served at the pagan temple? These verses are dealing with the second question: is it sin to go to the pagan temple for a meal? Now we really don't care about this question much today. But we need to observe Paul's method of reflecting on the circumstances and the Scripture as he makes application.

Precept - The Sin They Are Confronted With (v.14)

The experienced believers, exercising their liberty to eat meat sacrificed in the pagan temples, were going to be tempted to commit idolatry.

Process - The Situation They Are Tempted In (v.15-20)

This can appear to be a very complicated argument. Let us try to follow it, not in the form that Paul presents it, but in a form more accessible to us.

- When we partake of the cup and the bread in communion we are sharing or fellowshiping in a spiritual way with Christ.
- When the Israelite ate the sacrifices they brought to the Temple, they were sharing or fellowshiping God at the altar.
- What is offered to idols and the idol itself is nothing. (Reflects on what he has taught in 1 Corinthians 8.)
- What the Israelite sacrificed [to idols], they were really sacrificing and therefore fellowshiping with demons, not God.¹
- They were not to open themselves to sharing in or fellowshiping with demons.
- You cannot take the Lord's Table and eat at the idol's table.
- So, a believer cannot partake of the Lord's Table and the idol's table without exposing himself to danger and provoking the Lord.

Paul is in sense reflecting on the very examples he has given in verses 6-10 and anticipating his discussion of the seriousness of the Lord's Table in Chapter 11.

Point - The Solution to Their Dilemma (v.21-22)

The conclusion then is simply that a believer was faced with a choice: fellowship with God in Communion or fellowship with demons by dining at the temple's table. It was choice between God and Satan. That is why this section starts with the injunction: flee idolatry.

There are so many applications of this today. Loved ones, you cannot participate in any activity where idolatry or the occult is involved. This will mean no astrology, no occult games, no D&D style games, no music or concerts where the text of the words worships or affirms Satan or Satanic themes, no involvement in ori-

Deuteronomy 32:15-18

The Greek does not have *the Gentiles* in it. It has been added by translators to make the text more readable, possibly then obscuring Paul's reference to the Old Testament. The Song of Moses then is the justification for the apostles understanding.

¹ Possibly, "When a pagan eats the sacrifices at table in the temple he is sharing in or fellowshiping with demons, not God."

ental or new age mystical techniques of meditation, relaxation, or exercise. These are clearly ways in which the modern Christian can “dine at the pagan table fellowshiping with demons.”

So the careful thought and application of a Biblical principle has dealt with one side of the question. Now, how do we deal with the other issues of liberty which do not involve us in spiritual danger and provocation of the Lord?

The Practice of Liberty to be Adopted (v.23-30)

In the light of all that has gone before how do we implement this in our daily practice. Since we are not, in our culture, directly affected by the particular problem here, I want to glean through this as a summary of the principles to guide us through the our own practice of Christian liberty.

Correction of Their Attitude (v.23-24)

Response to Their Statement (v.23)

“Everything is permissible”, however:

- Profitable - self directed
- Edifying - others directed

Reason for His Tests (v.24)

This phrase is one which Paul brings to the Christian’s attention often. Our primary concern is the good of others, not our own good. See also Romans 15:2 and Philippians 2:4.

Circumstances of Their Application

General Rule - Broadest Application (v.25-26)

This statement is to cover situations in the market place. It may be aimed particularly at Jewish believers.

- Statement of the principle (v.25).
- Support for the principle (v.26)
See Psalm 24:1; 50:12; 1 Tim. 4:4

Guiding Exception - Particular Application (v.27-30)

This paragraph covers the situation where a believer is in the home of an unbeliever and someone points out that the food is sacrificed meat. Do we then, as Christians, simply assert that we are free? No, Paul says in this situation we are not to eat, even if we are giving up our liberty for the sake of the conscience of another (possibly for the sake of another [kind of, that is unconverted] conscience.)

Two questions which arise: one pointing to what he has just said and one pointing to what he is going to say.

- Why should I be judged by another’s conscience?

- Why should I be slandered when I am thankful for the food and have given thanks for it?

↳ The answer is in the following.

The Principles of Liberty Affirmed (v.31-11:1)

The whole teaching on liberty can be wrapped up in these concluding principles.

The Objective of Glory to God (v.31)

Do everything you do so as to reflect the worth and value of God in Christ. No matter what you do, govern your behavior guided so that God can and does receive glory.

The Goal of Offense to None (v.32)

Too many commentators make too much of this tri-fold distinction laying it down as a comprehensive and conclusive division of all people. That is not his point in the context at all. There were Jews and Gentiles with their own cultural and ethnic heritage which they were to be sensitive to. Therefore, in our liberty, we must be aware of the impact on the cultural and ethnic diversity both in and outside the church.

The Effort of Profit to the Lost (v.33)

Evangelism has a large part in shaping what we do and do not do. If we are merely trying to please ourselves, we will lose our evangelistic fervor and effectiveness.

The Identification of Models to Emulate (11:1)

The example of Christ is mediated through men whose lives shape and mold us as we pattern ourselves after their following of Christ, the King.

- Lessons**
- We must be very careful that our liberty does not become sin. Spiritual privilege is no guarantee of spiritual purity.
 - Discerning where liberty ends and license begins requires deep reflection on the Scripture and careful consideration of our culture.
 - All assertions of liberty must be grounded in the Scripture. Notice how often, when stating their liberty, he connects it to particular texts.
 - Particular applications of principles in the Scripture give us guidelines on how we are to apply those same principles in our situations.
 - In all areas of liberty we must ask the following questions:
 - ➡ Am I sufficiently aware of the pitfalls?
 - ➡ Is it profitable to me?
 - ➡ Is it edifying to others?
 - ➡ Does it glorify God?
 - ➡ Is it offensive within my cultural milieu?
 - ➡ Does it build or burn bridges in evangelism?
 - ➡ Does it follow Christ-like models?

May God be pleased to give us such a spirit of grace in our liberty that we will exalt God, edify one another and evangelize the lost.

Convictions of Matters of Conscience

Romans 14:1-15:7

Behold, how good and pleasant it is
when brothers dwell in unity!
It is like the precious oil on the head,
running down on the beard,
on the beard of Aaron,
running down on the collar of his robes!

It is like the dew of Hermon,
which falls on the mountains of Zion!
For there the LORD has commanded the blessing,
life forevermore.

Psalm 133

Introduction Here is the problem we face as a people called out of all nations and all cultures. How can we function as one in the midst of our diversity? How were the Christians in Rome, some of whom were converted Jews reared in Judaism and the rest of whom were converted Gentiles reared in Paganism – how are they to sit down together at the Agape Feast? Some would be bringing in pork and some wine to drink – while for others the food should be kosher and wine was forbidden. You see, there is a very practical problem of dealing with issues that weren't doctrinal yet were very difficult practically.

Today, we face many of these same kinds of issues. We call them things that are in gray areas. How do we function as one when some of you really are uncomfortable without a tie at church and some are coming in shorts? How about earrings, ponytails and so on? What about Christmas trees and celebrating mother's day at church? What about serving wine instead of or along-side of grape juice – or just grape-juice?

And we are a relatively mono-culture church – I pray that God would give us the opportunity to more reflect in our membership the scene around heaven's throne – we are not challenged very much as we could be.

Paul has been arguing for the essential oneness of Jew and Gentile – in sin, in salvation, in sanctification, under God's sovereignty, in service – now, it comes to a head in whether they will function according to the doctrine they have learned. How do I know that? Because this long pericope ends in Romans 15:9-12 by celebrating God's purpose of unity for Jew and Gentile in Christ.

So, let us read the text this morning. Then I want to follow the flow of argument as Paul has located it in the text. But I want to spend some of our time this morning, working through a diagram – a chart – of this text that helps to think in terms of principles and applications. One other point – there is a companion text in 1 Corinthians that articulates other principles not given here. So, our study this morning is not all that is to be said about how we function in liberty – for example, it does not

address at all what we do when we are different in our opinions and are in the presence of unbelievers.

<< READ TEXT >>

Its Positive Precepts

(14:1-2)

Let's begin by thinking our way through the text with Paul. As I have said, this text addresses a problem in the church at Rome – how are Jews and Gentiles to be one when they are so different in their personal preferences.

What is Required

Those who are weak in faith are to be welcomed or received – accepted. This is the core precept. Differences of opinion about certain lifestyle issues are not to be the grounds for rejection and division. Furthermore, they are to be received but not to quarrel over opinions. In other words, these differences that he will elaborate on are not to be the source of arguments, debates, cliques and so on.

Who are the Weak

The ones who are to be received are those who are weak in faith. Verse 2 tells us that the weak are those who only eat vegetables and do not eat meat. The weak have self-imposed rules for living that the strong do not have *that are not related to moral issues*.

Stott writes, “We are not to envisage a vulnerable Christian easily overcome by temptation but a sensitive Christian full of indecision and scruples. What the weak lack is not strength of self-control but liberty of conscience.” (Stott, *Romans*, p.355). We are to see in this text, primarily Jewish believers whose upbringing in the Law and exposure to Judaistic asceticism meant they had lots of rules and do's and don'ts. So weak in faith are not weak in doctrine, but whose faith is not strong in Christian liberty. The weak are the ones who have a lot of rules and regulations for their walk with God. Seems backward, doesn't it. While we must be very careful about sin, we must not elevate our personal preferences to the level of being sin for all.

What it is Not

Now this tells us then that Paul is not creating a refuge for evildoers, legalists, Pharisees who use their narrow views or even this text to require and compel others to agree with their views. In fact, legalism is the clear enemy of liberty of conscience.

It also tells us that Paul is not here talking about liberty in doctrine, per se. Romans 14-15 is not a refuge for those who are a-theological nor for those who hold to error. In the text itself, it is about personal preferences whose practice has some Biblical justification. We will make the broader applications to our day, later.

Its Negative Prohibitions

(14:3-23)

I want to present these as an exquisite piece of jewelry – multiple, linked settings of silver and gold of what we ought to do in which is a centerpiece of why we ought to do it.

Vulnerability to Mutual Disregard

(v.3-12)

Paul begins with the primary problem that plagues our differences.

Its Typical Expression

- Those with stronger consciences despise and look down on those with more sensitive consciences. Those are free have a superior attitude and treat others with unloving condescension.
- Those with weaker consciences denounce and condemn those with strong consciences. All of their rules for their own personal holiness become the standard by which others are judged.

Therefore, those who are free are to honor and protect the weaker, not looking down on them. Those who are weaker must not impose their rules and regulations on others, evaluating their spirituality on a self-imposed standard.

Its Biblical Correction

Paul supports this with major challenges to way we think and want – areas in which we must examine ourselves and repent. These are not just random thoughts, but rather are a logical development, a progression of

- God has received them and thus He is their master (v.3-4) It is not right to look down on or to judge the performance of another servant over whom you do not have authority. Paul places this in the context of dietary regulations.
- We live under the Lordship of Christ to honor and glorify Him, not ourselves (v.5-9). Paul adds the context of celebrating special days (probably, Jewish feast days). Each one is to be firmly convinced in his own mind and thus aims his practice to honor and glorify Christ. Pleasing Christ is each person's aim. And both practices can and do please Christ *even though they are different*. The reason is that our lives are not self-oriented (my individual sanctification) but Christ oriented, pleasing Him in all we do.
- We will give an account to Christ (v.10-12). Since this paragraph begins with reminding both parties of their sinful tendencies then this is being addressed to both. There is a very real sense in which Paul points us away from being accountable to one another in these areas.

So, we are not to despise or condemn one another in these areas because we serve and are accountable to God, who is our master, Lord and righteous Judge.

Vulnerability to Mutual Destruction

(v.13-23)

The next two paragraphs speak to the practice of our liberty, describing those attitudes and priorities that govern practical choices and conduct.

In our Private Interactions**(v.13-19)**

In our private relationships, there is the possibility of causing harm to the weak in faith (v.13-19). We must not destroy or grieve others by causing them to actively violate their conscience (stumbling/hindrance) (v.15). Paul, one of those who are strong in faith, says that nothing in and of itself is ceremoniously unclean in Old Testament categories (v.14). For the weak, their conscience renders the thing unclean for them and the strong, they must practice their freedom so as not to cause what is OK to be denounced as evil. Overarching all this, Kingdom priorities of love (v.15), righteousness, peace and joy in the Spirit (v.17-18) motivate us to serve Christ in a way that is acceptable to Him and approved by others. Our primary pursuit is not self-serving insistence on our preferences but on the pursuit of corporate peace and mutual edification.

In our Public Contexts**(v.20-23)**

Second there is the possibility of causing harm to the work of God (v.20-23). In what we do in public ministry contexts must not cause people to violate their consciences. And those with weaker consciences must not violate them. If they doubt, they must not partake and those who have faith, must graciously accept, provide and support them.

This is not to say that what is allowed is sink to the level of the most sensitive conscience in the congregation. What is required of all, however, must not require and force those with sensitive consciences to actively participate. So the Gentile believers are not to make Jewish believers eat pork at the Agape Feast, but pork can be brought to be enjoyed by those who were free to do so.

In all these areas, there is a very simple question that we must ask ourselves: do I question that practice for myself? Do I have doubts? Does it bother me to do that? Then DON'T. When you do, you sin. But if, under instruction, your conscience becomes Biblically taught and you no longer doubt, then you may. And if you have questions, don't condemn others who are free. You who are free, help the weak to please God by encouraging them not to violate their consciences nor putting them in positions where they have to.

Its Shaping Principles**(15:1-7)**

This is one of those very poorly placed chapter breaks. The break ought to go after 15:7 or even possibly after 15:13. So this paragraph is part of what Paul is teaching in chapter 14.

The Pattern of Christ**(v.1-4)**

Our obligation to bear with others and to not please ourselves is grounded in the example that Christ has left us and the instruction the Word gives to us.

Paul here shows us how Christ's own selflessness exposes our own tendencies to please ourselves (v.1-3). When we are mostly about plotting and planning our own agendas, then we will almost certainly harm people and destroy the church. Yet Christ has established a pattern of persistent love and enduring sacrifice,

even when He was being reviled for it. So we must not only be a people who embrace these truths in practice, but we must endure when it is hard and controversial.

We look to the pattern in Christ by studying the Word of Christ, the Scriptures (v.3-4). Paul can quote this Old Testament text into theirs (and our situations) because it points to Christ. The Scriptures are written about Christ for us in our situations so that, being instructed, we will persist with joy – endure and be encouraged. Paul is showing us a Biblical hermeneutic. Rather than using the Old Testament in a way that enforces dietary restrictions and ceremonial feast days, the Old Testament is relevant to us as we bring it forward through Christ and in Christ.

The Prayer for Unity

(v.5-7)

Paul closes this section by praying for the grace of a God-honoring harmony. This prayer points our harmony towards a unified glorifying of God. The purpose in living together in harmony is to glorify God – with voices in exaltation and evangelism.

It has been my observation over 25 years of ministry that mutual regard in these matters – true loving consideration almost always allows for a practice to exist without constraint of the strong or sin by the weak. I have also noticed that the tendency of the weak is to be legalistic and then to retreat into liberty to enforce their legalism through language like, “What you are doing offends me.” One of the mistakes is to equate being offended by someone else’s practice with stumbling. Paul always uses stumbling to refer to active participation. Certainly, the strong may, in sacrificial love, give up whatever even offends – but the weak may not Biblically require it.

So, Paul says, welcome one another AS – in the way that – Christ has welcomed you. Do so aiming to magnify the supremacy and worth of God.

Summary

Welcome One Another (14:1;15:7)

Term		Weak	Strong
Identification <i>Church in Rome</i>		Christians whose consciences were instructed by the Law Primarily Jews	Christians whose consciences were free Primarily Gentiles. <i>Paul (14:13)</i>
Issues	Food	Abstain	Eat
	Holy Days	Honor/Celebrate	Not Recognize
	Worship Application	Not raise hands	Raise hands
Tendency		Judge & Criticize	Despise/Look down on
Correction		Humbly teachable	Honoring and protecting
Commands		No stumbling block	
		Not destroy	
		Make for peace	
		Live in harmony	
		↔	Bear their failings
Reasons		God has received us (14:3; 15:7)	
		God is our Lord and Master (14:8)	
		God is our Judge – we answer to Him (14:10)	
		The Kingdom is a priority (14:17)	
		Christ did not please Himself (15:3)	
Standard		All by faith	
Aim		Unified glorifying of God	

Welcome One Another		
Term	Weak	Strong
Identification	Christians whose consciences were instructed by the Law Primarily Jews	Christians whose consciences were free Primarily Gentiles <i>Included Paul (14:13)</i>
Issues	Food	Abstain
	Holy Days	Honor/Celebrate
	Raising Hands	Not Raise Hands
Tendency	Judge & Criticize	Despise/Look Down
Correction	Humbly teachable	Honoring & Protecting

Welcome One Another		
Term	Weak	Strong
Commands	No Stumbling Block	
	Not destroy	
	Make for peace	
	Live in Harmony	
	↔	Bear their failings
Reasons	God has received us (14:3;15:7)	
	God is our Lord and Master (14:8)	
	God is our Judge – we answer to Him (14:10)	
	The Kingdom is a priority (14:17)	
	Christ did not please Himself (15:3)	

Welcome One Another		
Term	Weak	Strong
Identification	Strict Consciences	Free Consciences
Issues	<i>Not raise hands</i>	<i>Free to raise hands</i>
Tendency	Judge & Criticize	Despise & Look down
Correction	Be teachable	Not force
Commands	No stumbling block, Not destroy, Make for peace, Live in harmony, Bear their failings	
Reasons	God has received us, God is our Lord and Master God is our Judge – we answer to Him The Kingdom is a priority, Christ did not please Himself	
Standard	All by Faith, not by Doubt	
Aim	Unified glorifying of God	

Conclusion

Romans 15:5-7 (Adapted)

Read together as a prayer.

May the God of endurance and
encouragement grant us to live in such
harmony with one another,
in accord with Christ Jesus,
that together we may with one voice
glorify the God and Father
of our Lord Jesus Christ.
Therefore welcome one another
as Christ has welcomed us,
for the glory of God.