

Encounter Church  
Sunday November 5, 2023

## Church Roles Life Together in Diversity

INTRODUCTION: Christians are not clones, identical in all respects! ***The church was never meant to be a cozy club of clones!***

One of the difficulties the church has always faced is that included in its membership are the rich and the poor, the healed and the broken, the powerful and the powerless, those from every stratum of society. The old and the young, the adults and the children, the conservatives and the radicals.

***The church was never meant to be a cozy club of clones! But this variety puts strains on us all!***

***There are bound to be tensions in Christian society and when we read our text in a moment we'll find that these tensions have been their from the first!***

***The Apostle Paul gives us advice as to how we are to live with others who love the Lord like we do but don't live out their faith maybe like we do.***

We'll see that the problem was that the Christians in Rome were passing judgement on each other in disputable matters!

The disputable matters were in a nutshell food and the observance of sacred days on the calendar.

DOES THIS PROBLEM EXIST IN THE MODERN CHURCH?

***How often do we find ourselves guilty of passing judgement on one another over matters which really are in the "gray zone?"***

***Paul was not teaching that sin is a matter of personal opinion! He was not teaching that as long as we think something is okay, it's okay!***

SCRIPTURE CLEARLY TEACHES THAT CERTAIN THINGS ARE WRONG!

***But there may be some things that are just a matter of personal conviction even disputable issues, and we SHOULD NOT impose those personal convictions on others.***

Just think of areas that have “hot buttons” in the modern church. The consumption of wine. The ownership of luxury goods. Forms of recreations such as movies and dancing. Christian schools or public schools or home schooling. Tattoos! And the list goes on and on and on!

LET’S LOOK AT PAUL’S ANSWER TO THESE DISPUTABLE MATTERS.

**Paul’s main point in what we’re about to read is that there is a Kingdom of God, not a cuisine of God, and the Kingdom of God is the priority!**

**And in God’s Kingdom, there is only one thing on the menu: unity- manifested by righteousness, peace and joy through love!**

Romans 14- “(1)Offer an open hand of fellowship to welcome every true believer, even though their faith may be weak and immature. And refuse to engage in debates with them concerning nothing more than opinions. (2)For example, one believer has no problem with eating all kinds of food, but another with weaker faith will eat only vegetables. (3)The one who eats freely shouldn’t judge and look down on the one who eats only vegetables. And the vegetarian must not judge and look down on the one who eats everything. Remember, God has welcomed him and taken him as his partner. (4)Who do you think you are to sit in judgment of someone else’s household servant? His own master is the one to evaluate whether he succeeds or fails. And God’s servants will succeed, for God’s power supports them and enables them to stand. (5)In the same way, one person regards a certain day as more sacred than another, and another person regards them all alike. There is nothing wrong with having different personal convictions about such matters. (6)For the person who observes one day as especially sacred does it to honor the Lord. And the same is true regarding what a person eats. The one who eats everything eats to honor the Lord, because he gives thanks to God, and the one who has a special diet does it to honor the Lord, and he also gives thanks to God. (7)No one lives to himself and no one dies to himself. (8)While we live, we must live for our Master, and in death we must bring honor to him. So dead or alive we belong to our Master. (9)For this very reason the Anointed One died and was brought back to life again, so that he would become the Lord God over both the dead and the living. (10)Why would you judge your brothers or sisters because of their diet, despising them for what they eat or don’t eat? For we each will have our turn to stand before God’s judgment seat. (11)Just as it is written: “As surely as I am the Living God, I tell you: ‘Every knee will bow before me and every tongue will confess the truth and glorify me!’ ” (12)Therefore, each one must answer for himself and give a personal account of his own life before God. Walking in Love (13)So stop being critical and condemning of other believers, but instead determine to never deliberately cause a brother or sister to stumble and fall because of your actions. (14)I know and am convinced by personal revelation from the Lord Jesus that there is nothing wrong with eating any food. But to the one who considers it to be unclean, it is unacceptable. (15)If your brother or sister is offended because you insist on eating what you want, it is no longer love that rules your conduct. Why would you wound someone for whom the Messiah gave his life, just so you can eat

what you want? (16)So don't give people the opportunity to slander what you know to be good. (17)For the kingdom of God is not a matter of rules about food and drink, but is in the realm of the Holy Spirit, filled with righteousness, peace, and joy. (18)Serving the Anointed One by walking in these kingdom realities pleases God and earns the respect of others. (19)So then, make it your top priority to live a life of peace with harmony in your relationships, eagerly seeking to strengthen and encourage one another. (20)Stop ruining the work of God by insisting on your own opinions about food. You can eat anything you want, but it is wrong to deliberately cause someone to be offended over what you eat. (21)Consider it an act of love to refrain from eating meat or drinking wine or doing anything else that would cause a fellow believer to be offended or tempted to be weakened in his faith. ( 22)Keep the convictions you have about these matters between yourself and God, and don't impose them upon others. You'll be happy when you don't judge yourself in doing what your conscience approves. (23)But the one who has misgivings feels miserable if he eats meat, because he doubts and doesn't eat in faith. For anything we do that doesn't spring from faith is, by definition, sinful."

**THE CONCLUSION BEFORE I GET TO THE CONCLUSION: *Believers are to make every effort to do those things that lead to peace, mutual upbuilding and UNITY!***

**HOW DO WE DO THAT?**

## **1. Stop Judging Others**

**ASK YOURSELF- "Am I looking at others with a critical eye or a caring eye?"**

Matthew 7:1- "Do not judge others, and you will not be judged."

What Jesus forbids is the spirit of faultfinding that overlooks ones own shortcomings while assuming the role of supreme judge in regards to the faults of others!

2 Corinthians 5:10- "For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in this earthly body."

***Paul reminds those in Rome that one day we will all be judged by the supreme judge and in this area we should be more focused on ourselves than others!***

***REMEMBER- Everybody answers to God AND NOT YOU!***

***So keep your personal convictions between you and God!***

This helps lead to peace, mutual upbuilding and UNITY!

## **2. Limit Your Liberty**

***Or in other words, don't cause others to stumble!***

*I'm amazed at those who are willing to destroy the work of God because they are not willing to limit their liberty when they know it offends a weaker brother or sister in Christ!*

**THE BIBLE IS CLEAR! *Even though I have the right, the liberty, if I know my actions will offend a weaker brother or sister, cause them to stumble, I should not do what I know I have the liberty to do!***

1 Corinthians 8:1- "Now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies."

1 Corinthians 8:9- "But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak."

***While freedom is a right, it is not a guide for your conduct! Love is your guide and rights, your liberties are to be laid aside in the interest of love!***

This helps lead to peace, mutual upbuilding and UNITY in the church!

### **3. Make Love Your Highest Aim**

**Why is it that sometimes we would rather limit our love than limit our liberties?**

Romans 14:14-15- "I know and am convinced on the authority of the Lord Jesus that no food, in and of itself, is wrong to eat. But if someone believes it is wrong, then for that person it is wrong. And if another believer is distressed by what you eat, you are not acting in love if you eat it. Don't let your eating ruin someone for whom Christ died."

***Make Love Your Highest Aim!***

***There is something in the Kingdom of God that is more important than being right!***

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS TO ACT IN LOVE!**

1 Corinthians 13:13- "And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

***Your personal conviction about the "gray area" is not your highest aim. Love is your highest aim!***

This helps lead to peace, mutual upbuilding and UNITY in the church.

**CONCLUSION: *Believers are to make every effort to do those things that lead to peace, mutual upbuilding and UNITY!***

***Unity in the Body Christ is bigger than anyone's personal perspective!***

***The church was never meant to be a cozy club of clones!***

***We are called to do life together, even in our diversity!***

John 3:16-17- ““For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.”

WHAT IS THE HOLY SPIRIT SAYING TO THROUGH THIS MESSAGE?