

Freedom vs Wisdom Part 2: Guarding One Another Spiritually: S. Swartz

September 14, 2025

1 Corinthians 6:12, Romans 14-15

- Wisdom is needed for times when we disagree with others about preferences we have.
- What is the proper attitude we should have towards others when we have different preferences?
- 1. **What is the difference between preferences and commands?** In Romans 14-15, christian liberty is the focus of Paul's exhortation. We are free from the Law of Moses, but Jews still observed a number of facets of the Old Covenant (OC). Sabbath is the sign of the OC. Communion is a sign of the New Covenant. OT believers loved God and desired to obey Him, Psalms 4:5, 27:6, 50:14, 50:23.
 - a. The Law cannot save (Heb. 10:1, Gal. 2:21, 3:11, Rom. 7:4), even as it came to be obsolete and pass away (Heb. 8:13), there were many parts of the Law that were special and meaningful to Jews.
 - b. There are three groups in Romans: 1) Jews who had kept the Law for many, many generations, although they know that Christ has come, still observe their history and customs. 2) Gentiles who came to faith in Christ and keep no customs, save those that are instituted in christian practice. 3) Gentiles who had a previous pagan lifestyle and abhor the practices they used to keep and want nothing to do with them.
 - c. Romans 14:1, 5-6: Believers who are bound with certain practices must not view others who don't keep those practices with contempt (14:10). V4-6, Freedom in Christ consecrates what we do as unto the Lord. If we observe a festival or not, we do so as unto the Lord.
 - d. Romans 14:13-14, We are commanded not to try to convince others of our position.
 - e. Preference: a morally neutral issue with no direct command in Scripture.
 - f. Command: a clear imperative in NT with which there is no doubt. See Eph. 4:26-32.
 - g. New Covenant Principle: With regards to singing, Eph. 5:19. If the congregation cannot hear the words or others singing is the music/singing too loud? Yes, because the command is to sing to one another in the assembly of saints, which implies that each one can hear the other.
 - i. App.#1: Rom. 14:5, each person should be fully convinced in their own minds of their practice.
 - ii. App.#2: Rom. 14:19, pursue those things which make for peace with other believers.
 - iii. App.#3: My limitations are for the good of my faith, not to insist upon others. Acts 18:18, Paul kept a Nazirite vow (Num. 6:2-5) for a time. Peter and John went to the temple at the hour of prayer, Acts 3:1. The church filled with new believers was meeting in the temple, Acts 2:46.
- 2. **What is the proper attitude towards holiness?** We are commanded to be holy in all our conduct, 1 Peter 1:14-16.
 - a. Ask this question: Are you one, who in the name of freedom, walks as close to the thin ice as possible or do you stay where it is safe? Believers should be careful to answer another believer in areas of preference because their conscience and beliefs should guide them.
 - b. Ask this question: If I am trying to walk on the thin ice and use my liberty, am I pursuing holiness? Am I drawn to the thin ice of freedom or pursuing holy conduct in all my ways? (See 2 Cor. 3:18).
- 3. **How do I take care of fellow believers in the matters of conscience?** Rom. 14:13, be careful not to put a stumbling block in front of them. Judge in the area of how we are encouraging our preferences to others and be sure we aren't hurting another brother with our actions and beliefs.
 - a. Romans 14:21, don't do anything that would make your brother stumble.
 - b. Romans 15:1-2, don't just please ourselves, but look to build up our brothers.
 - c. Romans 15:5-6, unity and peace are the goal in all things, so together we can proclaim the Gospel.
- What about 1 Cor. 6:12: "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable?" This line "all things are lawful for me," is recited 3 times in 1 Cor. 6:12 & 10:23. In 1 Cor. 6:13-20, Paul is stating that sexual immorality is a sin. It isn't lawful for believers; it isn't a conscience issue. Food does indeed pass through the stomach, but sexual sin affects the body and is a sin against God. 1 Cor. 10:23-29 speaks to believers not to ask where the food has come from. But if a brother tells you that the food was offered to idols and can't partake, then you defend the conscience of the brother and not partake. The principle is to value the brother in Christ and their conscience above the unbeliever.

Further Discussion and Application

Jesus provided an example for us to demonstrate love for others. 1 Cor. 10:24 commands believers to seek the good of others. Phil. 2:2-5, tells us to prefer others and to do nothing from selfish ambition or deceit. This was the mind of Christ (V5). Why does Scripture command us not to push our liberties upon others? Why are we to be focused on ensuring our actions and words don't put a stumbling block in front of another brother?

Whatever we do, we are to do all for the glory of the Lord, 1 Cor. 10:31. How can we ensure that our actions are wholesome, non-controversial, and done so as not to offend the conscience of another? Why can discipleship and mentoring be an antidote to helping others grow in their faith and knowledge of the Lord? How will this also help in bringing unity to the church? Would we be willing to give up our christian liberty to put at ease our brother in Christ?

Idolatry of self can be very subtle. We can want everyone to like what we like. We can refuse to partake when others are doing something we don't want to do. How is trying to force others to conform to our desires idolatry? With regards to Scripture, what can other brothers and sisters in the Lord insist that we obey? Can a brother insist we give? Serve? Pray? Sing? Gather? Love? Be Kind? How can we help immature brothers and sisters know the difference between liberty and the law of Christ?

A lot of issues in life are caused when we are only vaguely familiar with others. We don't really know them all that well and we hear snippets and bites of conversations, rather than full explanations and doctrine that might support their beliefs. Why should we draw near to them and truly get to know them before we make opinions about them? Why are closer relationships much stronger and a strength to the body of Christ? What should we be unified about concerning our Lord and Savior? Why should our Christian liberties not diminish or take away from the work of spreading the Gospel? What have we missed if we pursue liberty over holiness?