

Differences

"Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

Romans 14:19

These are Paul's concluding remarks to the Roman church. He encouraged them to consider the need to provide for unity in how they viewed other's belief systems and traditions. In this new church he gave instructions that offered them, and to us now, a foundation for relationships to be established on love to one another rather than division over strongly held beliefs.

The Apostle then set forth an interesting philosophy of agreement. He stated in the previous verses that the Kingdom of God was righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. It is not in the doing of right things that this can be found, but in relationship with the Father. He promoted the thought that the Father graciously accepts us through His work and effort, not ours.

He went on to say that if we serve God in these things, we are not only accepted of God, but approved of men. We accept them whether they are mature Christians or babies in the faith. My freedoms do not stand upon the Word only, but how those around me influenced by my witness and my walk of faith.

When our relationship with the Father provides us with liberty to do some things that others deem wrong, our attitude regarding our freedom is as important as what we may be practicing. In other words, my freedom can become a stumbling block to another Christian. Paul's view is that if another stumbles over my liberty, then I must exercise wisdom in that or discontinue it altogether!

It is the functioning of these love characteristics that the Father wants to see in our lives. *Our acceptance by Him is through the blood of Jesus, but our approval comes through obedience in walking as Jesus did.* As we receive approval from the Father, we need to ensure that our behavior elicits approval from those who are of another belief system, especially within the Body of Christ.

These words of instruction not only reveal a very important principle of the Christian experience and emphasis upon the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives, but also instructs us concerning our relationships with one another in doctrinal discussions and religious practices. The entire message of the Kingdom principle mentioned here was over problems of eating of meats and for others, abstinence from them. He believed that there was a greater issue at stake here than doctrine, but that of Christian love, unity, and peace among the Family of God.

And of course, our view of others in their freedoms; our being right is not always the greatest issue. We are not always going to agree. However, he says to follow after peace, to pursue, to run after those things which make for peace! Do your best to find points for agreement. Be one that tries to edify your brother and sister rather than addressing points of difference to be reconciled to everyone's satisfaction.

Refraining from voicing our scriptural opinion does not necessarily compromise our stand on biblical issues. We don't always have to go around defending the faith and rescuing the Church from heresy. There is a time to speak and a time to be silent. Put your trust in the Holy Spirit to reveal the truth to those you talk to. And, continuously anticipate a favorable and receptive response to your Scriptural admonition when you do