

# XIV

## Liberty and Legalism

### ROMANS 14:1-12

As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions.<sup>2</sup> One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables.<sup>3</sup> Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him.<sup>4</sup> Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

<sup>5</sup> One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.<sup>6</sup> The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God.<sup>7</sup> For none of us lives

to himself, and none of us dies to himself.<sup>8</sup> For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.<sup>9</sup> For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

<sup>10</sup> Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God;<sup>11</sup> for it is written,

“As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.”

<sup>12</sup> So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

## READ | ROMANS 14:1–12

## THINK ABOUT

Have you ever passed judgment on another believer over a preference issue? If we are honest, I think all of us would have to admit that we have. In these verses, Paul instructed the Roman Christians, whether Jew or Gentile, to be careful not to pass judgment on one another so that they would preserve unity in the church when it comes to our liberty in Christ concerning preference issues. The threat to church unity arose when some of the mature believers accused some of the weaker believers as being legalistic regarding Old Testament rites and prohibitions. Likewise, the weak judged the mature as being irresponsible when it came to liberty in Christ regarding dietary laws and observing the Sabbath.

Paul instructed them not to pass judgment on brothers and sisters in Christ over issues that are not clearly commanded or prohibited in Scripture. Whether weak or strong in the Lord, Paul's main point to all believers is that our motive in decisions about issues of conscience must be to please the Lord. "For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord" (vv. 7–8). Therefore, the focus of our Christian lives is never about ourselves. Everything we do should be to glorify God. (See 1 Corinthians 10:31.)

## APPLY

Take some time to think about areas in which your lifestyle may cause others to stumble because of your preferences. Contemplate if any of these preferences have been legalistic in nature.

ASK

Are there some changes in your lifestyle regarding preference issues that you need to make before the Lord?

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Will these changes in your lifestyle encourage more edification and unity in the body of Christ?

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Who can you disciple about these truths with regard to your freedom in Christ?

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PRAY

*Heavenly Father, I praise You that You sent Your Son to fulfill the law on my behalf. I praise You for the freedom I experience in Christ. Help me daily to die to self and to live for You! Help me to walk in the Spirit so that I can be a godly example to others, preserving the spirit of unity in the bond of peace.*

1 CORINTHIANS 10:31

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

EPHESIANS 4:1–3

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

COLOSSIANS 2:16–17

Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.



SING

“Live Like That” — *David Frey, Ben Glover, Ben McDonald*





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or whatever you do,  
do all to the glory of God.

1 CORINTHIANS 10:31