

Romans 14:1-12

Freed by Grace – Bound by Love

- Christians may have a hard time separating from the world but they seem to have no trouble separating from one another. Over 9000 Christian denominations are registered world-wide. The following tale though funny is all too true.

I was walking across a bridge recently. I spied this guy who looked like he was ready to jump off. So, I thought I'd try to stall him until authorities showed up (or at least until I had time to put film in my camera).

"Don't jump!" I said.

"Why not?" he said. "Nobody loves me."

"God loves you," I said. "You believe in God, don't you?"

"Yes, I believe in God," he said.

"Good," I said. "Are you Christian or Jewish?"

"Christian," he said.

"Me, too!" I said. "Protestant or *Catholic*?"

"Protestant," he said.

"Me, too!" I said. "What kind of Protestant?"

"Baptist," he said.

"Me, too!" I said. "Independent Baptist or *Southern Baptist*?"

"Independent Baptist," he said.

"Me, too!" I said. "New Evangelical/Moderate Independent Baptist or *Conservative Independent Baptist*?"

"Conservative Independent Baptist," he said.

"Me, too!" I said. "Calvinistic Conservative Independent Baptist or *Lose-Your-Salvation Armenian Conservative Independent Baptist*?"

"Calvinistic Conservative Independent Baptist," he said.

"Me, too!" I said. "Dispensational Premillennial Calvinistic Conservative Independent Baptist or *Historical Premillennial Calvinistic Conservative Independent Baptist*?"

"Dispensational Premillennial Calvinistic Conservative Independent Baptist," he said.

"Me, too!" I said. "Against Women in Ministry Dispensational Premillennial Calvinistic Conservative Independent Baptist or *For Women in Ministry Dispensational Premillennial Calvinistic Conservative Independent Baptist*?"

"Against Women in Ministry Dispensational Premillennial Calvinistic Conservative Independent Baptist," he said.

"Me, too!" I said. "Unashamed Fundamentalist Against Women in Ministry Dispensational Premillennial Calvinistic Conservative Independent Baptist or *Strict Separation of Church and State Against Women in Ministry Dispensational Premillennial Calvinistic Conservative Independent Baptist*?"

"Unashamed Fundamentalist Against Women in Ministry Dispensational Premillennial Calvinistic Conservative Independent Baptist," he said.

"Me, too!" I said. "Pro-Disney Boycott Pro-Life Unashamed Fundamentalist Against Women in Ministry Dispensational Premillennial Calvinistic Conservative Independent Baptist or *Anti-Disney Boycott Pro-Choice Unashamed Fundamentalist Against Women in Ministry Dispensational Premillennial Calvinistic Conservative Independent Baptist*?"

"Pro-Disney Boycott Pro-Life Unashamed Fundamentalist Against Women in Ministry Dispensational Premillennial Calvinistic Conservative Independent Baptist," he said.

"Me, too!" I said. "KJV Only Pro-Disney Boycott Pro-Life Unashamed Fundamentalist Against Women in Ministry Dispensational Premillennial Calvinistic Conservative Independent Baptist or *Modern Versions Pro-Disney Boycott Pro-Life Unashamed Fundamentalist Against Women in Ministry Dispensational Premillennial Calvinistic Conservative Independent Baptist*?"

"MODERN VERSIONS Pro-Disney Boycott Pro-Life Unashamed Fundamentalist Against Women in Ministry Dispensational Premillennial Calvinistic Conservative Independent Baptist" he said.

"Did you say Modern versions? You heretic!" I said. And I pushed him over.

- Paul's teaching on "Free Grace" (Rom.1-5) raises practical questions.
 1. Am I free from the Law Covenant? YES! Ch.1-5
 2. Am I free to sin? NO! Ch.6-8
 3. Is God finished with Israel? NO! Ch.9-11
 4. Am I free from self-sacrificing service? NO! Ch.12
 5. Am I free from the laws of the state? NO! Ch.13
 6. Am I free from the conscience of others? NO! Ch.14-15
- In this section, Paul addresses the very practical question of how mature Christians (who understand and walk in their liberation from the Law) care for younger Christians who may not yet understand that liberty.
- For more detailed study of this issue see apptoteach.org. [theology file #308](#), [#802](#)

“¹ Now accept the one who is weak in faith, {but} not for {the purpose of} passing judgment on his opinions. ² One man has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables {only.} ³ Let not him who eats regard with contempt him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats, for God has accepted him ⁴ Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand. ⁵ One man regards one day above another, another regards every day {alike.} Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶ He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. ⁷ For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; ⁸ for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. ⁹ For to this end Christ died and lived {again}, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. ¹⁰ But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God. ¹¹ For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall give praise to God." ¹² So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God.

1. Two issues are mentioned in this text.
 - relating to the culture (eating meat)
 - respecting the Kingdom (the Sabbath)
 - These issues are relevant today. Should the church accommodate its programs and styles to the non-Christian world in order to win people to faith or should it emphasize Christian distinctives. Maintaining holiness or emphasizing grace creates tension in most congregations.
2. Christians will apply their Christian liberty in different ways but all of us will face the same temptations to judge others rather than love them.

The strong in faith

“lives for the Lord”

“view others with contempt”

“pass judgment”

application

attitude

action

The weak in faith

“dies for the Lord”

“view others with contempt”

“pass judgment”

“will face the Bema of God”

accounting

“will face the Bema of God”

The weak in faith may tend to view the Christian walk in terms of what we die to. The strong in faith may tend to view the Christian walk in terms of what we live for. Both deserve respect and love from the other. Neither has a sole right to dictate policy for the whole Christian community.

3. We must respect a hierarchy within Christian concerns.

Fundamental doctrines of the faith

Basic moral teaching of the faith

Unity among believers

Secondary doctrines & ethics

Cultural expressions

Personal preferences

When would God demand unity?

When would God expect forbearance?

When would God encourage differences?

4. The lessons we must learn from this text.
 - Different groups have a legitimate part in the church.
 - One group may be more enlightened than another.
 - Neither group is responsible to judge or convert the other. *Liberty is not a mandate to convert others. Conservatives have no right to bind others. Personal preferences do not dictate public policy.*
 - Christian unity is not based on uniformity of belief or practice but on love.
 - Christ will judge us on the basis of how well we loved one another.
 - Christians must answer (primarily) to God not to one another.
 - Major on majors and minor on minors.
5. The **judgment seat of Christ** (Bema) for all believers. (see apptoteach.org theology file #906)
 - Not Damnation - Heaven or hell in the next life - John 3:18
 - nor Discipline - Correction for growth in this life - Hebrews 12:10
 - but **Disclosure** - The revealing of each person's motives and fruit - I Corinthians 3:13 “each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work.”
6. When is it wise to leave a congregation?

- a. Proper reasons
 1. **Heresy** (fundamentals of the faith disrespected, etc.)
 2. **Gross distortion of purpose.** (Social club, political action group, cult practices, etc.)
 3. **Gross misconduct of leadership that is not corrected.** (immorality, dishonesty, manipulation, pride, etc.)
 4. **Church discipline.** (excommunication)
 - b. Possible reasons
 1. **Distrust of leaders.** Leader's violation of ethical standards.
 2. **Special needs not addressed.** (the hearing impaired, personal gifts, vision, children's ministry, etc.)
 3. **A change of purpose or vision** that excludes valid ministry. (evangelism, teaching, etc.)
 4. **Change in geographic local.**
 - c. Poor reasons
 1. **Broken relationships** with other members.
 2. **Hurt by leaders** or other members.
 3. **Disagreement with leaders** on secondary issues.
 4. **Differences of style or taste.**
7. For notes on various views of the Sabbath see apptoteach.org theology file #814