

Solid Rock Christian Church Manassas, Virginia

Bible Study - November 18, 2021

Prepared & Presented by: Pastor James G. Austin, Jr., PhD, D.Min.

Title: "When Opinions Differ"

Subtitle: "Is Right Ever Wrong?"

Scripture Reference: Romans 14:5

"One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."

I. Introduction

A. A man and his family were taking a trip in their car, and he noticed that the gas tank was nearly empty. So, he pulled into a service station.

B. After his wife and kids got out of the car, he filled the tank. While doing so, he noticed a sign on the restaurant next door that said "Freddie's." It looked like it might be a good place to grab a bite to eat.

C. After paying for the gas, the man walked to the rest room. While in there he noticed that someone had left a message on the wall, strategically placed, so that a weary traveler like himself would see it. The message said: "Eat at Freddie's - 50,000 flies can't be wrong."

D. Well, that was one man's opinion. "Opinions." Darrell Royal once said, "are like noses. Everyone's got one."

E. Each of us have different tastes. Not everyone likes the same food, music, hobby, or sports team. That can add up to a lot of trouble, especially if we don't learn how to handle our different opinions.

F. In Romans Chapter 14, Paul was writing to a group of opinionated believers. They were so opinionated that they began to

withdraw fellowship from one another. At one time, their fellowship was in Jesus Christ but then, it shifted to their opinions.

II. Discussion [Part I] - Differences Can Divide us at Dinner Time

A. In Rome, the hot topics were diets and days. The Jewish Christians observed the Sabbath day, while the Gentile Christians regarded every day alike.

B. Many Jewish believers became vegetarians (Romans 14:3) rather than run the risk of eating forbidden or unclean meat. The Gentiles, on the other hand, had no problem eating meat.

C. Consider the following illustration as I make my point. When the Jews and Gentiles went out to Pizza Hut, the Gentiles ordered pepperoni pizza with pork sausage on thick crust. The Jews ordered the vegetarian pizza on unleavened bread.

Comment: I'm sure it would be safe to say that the Jews and Gentiles didn't sit at the same table together.

Point: Their food was more important than their fellowship.

III. Discussion [Part II] - Disagreements Can Cause Division

A. A minister/pastor returned to visit a church he once served. He ran into a gentleman who had been an elder when the pastor was there, but the man had left the church.

B. The minister asked the man, "What happened? You used to be there every time the doors opened." The man said - "Well pastor, a difference of opinion arose in the church. Some of us couldn't accept the final decision, so we left to start a church of our own.

"Is that where you worship now?" asked the pastor.

"No" the man answered, "we found that there, too, people weren't cooperating. So, a small group of us began meeting in a rental hall at night."

"Has that proven satisfactory?"

"No, I can't say that it has," the man responded. Satan was active even in that fellowship, so my wife and I withdrew and worship on Sundays at home by ourselves."

"Well, at least you and your wife have found inner peace."

"No, I'm afraid we haven't. Even my wife developed ideas that I wasn't comfortable with, so now she worships in the living room and I worship in the bedroom."

C. If we can't agree to disagree, division is inevitable. In order to preserve the unity of the faith, we must give freedom to others to disagree on certain issues.

D. Some churches have split over the 3 percent they disagree upon, rather than being unified over the 97 percent in which they agree.

Comment: It is reported that a pastor once said that his church split over where to put a water fountain.

Point: We can easily lose perspective if we don't look at the whole picture.

IV. Discussion [Part III] - How People Form Opinions

A. It would be great if we could all agree with the following fact:
"Not Everyone Thinks Like You Do!"

B. Many beliefs are formed by our backgrounds - the way we were raised. Some people today have their minds made up. They have held their beliefs so long; they think they must be correct because "That's the way I was raised."

Comment: This may not necessarily be wrong.

C. But what if what we were taught when we were growing up was incorrect? We must form our beliefs based upon truth rather than our past experiences.

D. It would be nice if everything we were taught growing up was absolutely correct. Many of our initial beliefs we formed as children need to be reexamined as we mature into adults. The

Apostle Paul said - **"When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things."** (1 Corinthians 13:11)

Comment: We must sort through what we have been taught, keep the things that are true, and leave behind misconceptions. **"Prove (i.e., test) all things; hold tight that which is good."** (1 Thess. 5:21)

E. Someone once said, "In a day of illusions and utter confusions, upon our delusions, we base our conclusions." We shouldn't form our beliefs upon illusions and delusions, but upon truth.

F. Convictions and opinions can also be formed by our teachers. Jesus said that a disciple (i.e., a pupil), after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher. "The disciple is not above his master; but every one that is perfect shall be as his master." (Luke 6:40)

G. Beliefs can be transferred from the teacher's mind to the student's. Sitting under incorrect teaching will form incorrect beliefs. This is why it is so important to choose the right teachers.

H. Other beliefs are determined by our stage of spiritual maturity. Some of the things you may have believed as a baby Christian may be quite different than what you believe after growing spiritually for twenty years.

I. One man was teasing a little boy about his baby brother. The man asked,

"What can he do? Can he walk?"

The boy answered, "Nope."

"Can he talk?" Asked the man:

"Nope."

"Can he feed himself?"

"Nope."

"Can he dress himself?"

"Nope."

"Well, what good is he?"

The little boy answered,
"Good grief, Mister, just give him some time!"

Comment: Sometimes we need to be patient with other believers as we wait for them to grow and mature spiritually; and don't forget, you were not "always" spiritually where you are now in your walk with the Lord!

A. When we encounter a person who disagrees with us, what are we supposed to do? Here are a couple of things **not to do**:

1. Don't force your opinions on others through arguing.
2. Don't use guilt to make others change their opinion(s).

Comment: This second method makes people feel guilty if they have differing opinions.

V. Discussion [Part IV] - How to Handle Differing Opinions

First - Don't Make a Big Deal Over Minor Issues. "**Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.**" (Matthew 23:24)

A. People have argued about trivial matters for centuries. There have been great theological debates over the following issues:

- What was the shape of the angel Gabriel's wings?
- Did Pilate use soap when he washed his hands?
- How much wine did they drink at the wedding in Cana?

B. The Christians in Rome were also arguing over trivial matters. These believers were in agreement on the key issues, such as the deity of Christ and salvation by grace, but they were dividing over their minor differences.

Comment: As they watched for tornadoes which might destroy the house, they forgot to inspect for termites.

C. Just like the Pharisees, the Romans strained out gnats and swallowed camels. Listen carefully.

D. The Pharisees had perfected the art of gnat-straining. They would strain their wine through a cloth to make sure that a gnat

did not accidentally get into the portion they were going to consume.

E. Gnats were unclean, and the Pharisees considered it to be disgusting at the very thought of swallowing a gnat.

F. The camel, on the other hand, was the largest unclean animal. Jesus said the Pharisees "strain out a gnat and swallow a camel" to illustrate their error.

Comment: We must never lose sight of the big picture.

Second - Accept Those Whose Opinions Differ Because God Has Accepted Them and You.

"Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations (i.e., disputes over doubtful things). ... for God hath received him." (Romans 14:1, 3c)

A. Paul said to accept the brother who disagrees because God has accepted him. If God can accept him, then you can too!

Points:

1) We can be brothers without being twin brothers.

2) If God calls someone His child, then we should call them our brother or our sister in Christ!

Third - Be Right in Your Heart, Not Just in Your Head.

A. The Jews considered the Sabbath to be a higher day than other days, but the Gentiles viewed every day the same. These were two completely different theological positions. Rather than telling them who was right, Paul said: "One man esteemeth one day above another: Another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks (Romans 14:5,6).

B. In other words, it doesn't matter who is right on these

matters if your convictions are attempting to glorify God. However, an additional factor should be considered. If your theological position is used to destroy someone, then you are wrong! "But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walketh thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died." (Romans 14:15)

Comment: An amazing truth is presented in this verse that people overlook. Please don't miss this.

You can be right in your head in what you believe, but if you are wrong in your attitude toward your brother or sister in Christ, you will be wrong.

Fourth - Don't Violate Your Own Conscience or Your Brothers.

"Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or any occasion to fall in his brother's way. I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean." (Romans 14:13,14)

"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." (Romans 15:1)

- A. Paul said that there are two kinds of believers in the Church: the strong and the weak. We usually consider ourselves strong and right and the other person weak and wrong.
- B. The strong brother or sister is the one who understands his or her liberty in Christ., The weak brother or sister only understands rules and regulations.
- C. Paul says "the strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength." Paul puts the responsibility on the stronger one to put up with the wrong convictions of the weaker one.
- D. The weaker brother or sister needs to grow in their knowledge of Christ. The stronger believer needs to grow in their love.

Point: We cannot and must not deny the following beliefs: We cannot deny the Trinity, the deity of Christ, the finished work of Jesus on the cross, His resurrection, and salvation by grace alone, through faith alone!

Comment: Our theological position on the Second Coming of Christ, our preference of worship style, and the clothes we wear to Church. We certainly may differ on these things.

E. Even so, consider the words of one of the early Church fathers whose name was Augustine, concerning differences of beliefs. He put it this way:

“In essentials, there must be unity.

In non-essentials, there must be liberty.

In all things, there must be charity.”

And the Church said - Amen!

Adjusting to Differing Opinions

- List the beliefs that you hold because of the way you were raised. As you reexamine your beliefs in light of Scripture, hold on to the correct beliefs and release all incorrect ones.
- In what ways can you bear the weaknesses of the weaker brother or sister in Christ?

It is once again interactive time. Please complete the biblical passages that follow by filling in the blank spaces. As always, each passage has been taken from the King James Version (KJV) of the Holy Bible.

“Let _____ be done through _____ or _____; but in lowliness of mind let each _____ other better than

_____."

[Philippians 2:3]

"Be kindly _____ one to another with _____
love; in _____ preferring one _____;"

[Romans 12:10]

"Who is a _____ man and endued with _____ among you? Let
him shew out of a good _____ his works with
_____ of _____. But if ye have bitter _____
and _____ in your hearts, _____ not, and _____ not against
the _____."

[James 3:13-14]

"A _____ answer turneth away _____; but _____ words
stir up _____. The _____ of the wise useth _____
aright: but the mouth of _____ poureth out _____."

[Proverbs 15:1-2]

Thank you so much for being a part of another Bible Study session and
my prayer is that the Lord will continue to bless and keep you.

Jude 3

Pastor Austin