

I. Paul’s Instruction Concerning Christian Liberty (1-4)

A. The welcome mat versus the wrestling mat (1) - “As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him **{welcome mat}, but not to quarrel over opinions **{wrestling mat}**.”** (Not for the purpose of setting them straight!)

B. The free conscience versus the fragile conscience (2-3) - “One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. 3 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.”

1. Recognizing each type - “One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables.

2. Responding to each type

a. The free will be tempted to look down upon the fragile - “Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains...”

b. The fragile will be tempted to condemn the free - “...let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him.”

C. Man’s denunciation versus God’s declaration (4) - “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..”

II. Paul’s Illustrations Concerning Christian Liberty (5-9)

A. Two opposing views concerning the days (5a) - “One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike...”

B. Two opposing views concerning diet (6b) - “...The one who eats...the one who abstains...”

C. One common denominator (6a, 6b) - “...in honor of the Lord...in honor of the Lord...in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God... in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God...” Each type of Christian was seeking to please his Lord

D. One inescapable conclusion (7-9) - “For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself.”

1. Ultimately we belong to the Lord in both our lives and after our deaths (8)

2. Christ’s earthly pilgrimage was so that He alone would be recognized as Lord (9)

III. Paul’s Application Concerning Christian Liberty (10-13)

A. Cultivate personal consecration (5b) - “Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.”

B. Prioritize relational commitment (13) - “Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.”

C. Remember individual accountability (10b-12) - “...For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God...every knee shall bow to Me and every tongue shall confess to God...So then each of us will give an account of himself to God..”

STRONG BRETHREN - Those who easily and gratefully enjoy the complete freedom which is provided in their relationship with Jesus Christ. They recognize their full deliverance from external, traditional, and ceremonial practices which others employ as part of their life of faith. They honor Christ by living devotedly to Him while exercising their gracious privilege of living above any and all traditions not specified in Scripture.

WEAK BRETHREN - Those who sincerely and strongly hold to traditions, ceremonies, and external guidelines as expressions of their true devotion to Jesus Christ. They live with great care to ensure that their invisible faith is visibly lived out. Their conscience does not allow them to enjoy the same freedoms that the stronger brethren enjoy. Their disciplines and traditions are means by which they express their worship of Christ.