

Lesson: WEAK BELIEVERS and LIBERTIES

One of the problems of a spiritual growing church like DSBC is spiritual mature believer's liberty causing offense among weaker believers.

Paul addressed this very problem in two churches of his day: Roman (Rom.14) and Corinthian churches (1 Cor.8-10).

During the next four weeks, we will study this problem by the following four lessons.

- Weak Believers and Liberties (Rom.14:1-6)
- Passing Judgment (Rom.14:7-12)
- Stumbling block (Rom.14:13-23)
- Laws of Liberty, Love, and Lost (1 Cor.8:1-13)

In Rom.14 and 1 Cor.8, Paul identified two classification of spiritual advancing believers in the church as weak and strong.

“Now accept the one who is weak in faith (ton astheneo/ p.a.ptc asm/ te pistis), but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.” (Rom.14:1)

“Now we who are strong (hoi dunatos) ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves.” (Rom.15:1)

We will begin by examining our lesson text by the following three point homiletical outline.

- Weak in Faith – positive – (accept/ proslambano/ p.m.impv.)
- Weak in Fellowship – negative (without contempt/ exoutheneo/ p.a.impv.)
- Weak in Freedom – positive (fully convinced/ plerophoreo/ p.p.impv.)

[Did you notice the three imperative moods (commands).]

This lesson will study SIX aspects of resolving conflict within the church regarding weak believer's taboos and the strong believer's liberties.

1. The weak believer is not a recent convert. He is a spiritual immature spiritual advancing believer.

He is minus pertinent categorical doctrines that would orient him to God grace in the CWL regarding LIBERTY AND LEGALISM.

The Greek word for weak has the alpha privative as a prefix (astheneo) and means without strength.

The spiritual immature believer is described as *weak in faith* (te pistis/ standard for divine truth) and also *weak in conscience* (he suneidesis/ standard for divine right and wrong) (Rom.14:1; 15:1; 1 Cor.8:7,10,12).

He was weak in a specific category of BD that could orient him to God's grace and liberty in CWL (Gal.5:1,13). In Roman church, it was regarding certain food and drink and days (Rom.14: 2,5-6,20).

2. The strong in faith is a spiritual mature believer who has pertinent CBD to orient him to God's grace regarding Liberty and Legalism (Rom.14:1,22; 15:1-3).

However he needs to be reminded about the application of LOVE towards the weaker believer (Rom.15:1, 14-15).

"Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but LOVE edifies." (1 Cor.8:1)

3. The strong believer is commanded to not treat with contempt the weaker believer.

"Let *not* him who eats regard with *contempt* (me exoutheneo/ p.a.impv/ command) him who does not eat." (Rom.14:3a) **This is a command and not a request!**

He was also commanded to accept the weaker believer just as he is without requiring change for fellowship.

"Now accept (proslambano/ p.m.impv/ command/ middle voice of benefit) the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions." (Rom.14:1)

4. The weak believer is commanded not to be critical or judgmental.

"And let not him who does not eat judge (me krino/ p.a.impv/ prohibitive command) him who eats, for God has accepted him." (Rom.14:3b)

Why is the weaker believer not to be judgmental of the liberty of the stronger believer? [GOD HAS ACCEPTED HIM (proslambano/ a.m.ind)].

Remember that Paul has told them both not to behave in such a way that they withdraw fellowship (Rom.14:3). In the next verse, he tell them both why – "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." (Rom.14:4)

5. Paul is explaining how to change conflict by changing beliefs (1 Cor.8:1-9).

"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the RENEWING OF YOUR MIND, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable (well-pleasing) and perfect." (Rom.12:2)

Taboos are prohibitions arbitrarily set by religious, social, political, educational groups that are superimposed on the truth of God's word. They are usually activities in the CWL that are dubbed as sins by legalists that are not so stated in the Bible.

One taboo in our lesson was eating meat that had been offered to idols (1 Cor.8:4-9). This had been addressed at the Jerusalem Conference in a controversy with Pharisaical legalists (Acts 15:5-6, 19-21, 28-29). It was regarded a sin but a hindrance to Jewish converts. Therefore apply the law of love. Or it was regarded a hindrance to giving the gospel. Therefore apply the law of love.

6. The spiritual advancing believer must understand that the only issue with eating is gluttony and prayer (1 Cor.8:8; 1 Tim.4:4-5; Rom.14:6; Prov.23:20-21; Matt.11:19; Acts 10-11).