

Back to Romans 14

by Richard E. Bieber

The sermon emphasizes the importance of repentance and unity in the face of division, and encourages listeners to give an account of themselves to God.

Scripture: Luke 18:9, Romans 11:1, Romans 14:1, Philippians 2:10

Topics: "Church Unity", "Repentance"

Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches about the importance of unity and repentance in the church, emphasizing the need to welcome those who are weak in faith without passing judgment on their differences. He warns against division caused by disputes over opinions, highlighting that God is the ultimate judge of each individual. Bieber urges the congregation to focus on repentance and giving account of themselves to God rather than criticizing or despising their fellow believers, stressing that true worship comes from a heart of humility and repentance.

Transcript

As for the man who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not for disputes over opinions. One believes he may eat anything, while the weak man eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who abstains, and let not him who abstains pass judgment on him who eats; for God has welcomed him. 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 Master is able to make him stand.

One man esteems one day as better than another, while another man esteems all days alike. Let everyone be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. He also who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God; while he who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. 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. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written,

"As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God."

So each of us shall give account of himself to God. Then let us no more pass judgment on one another, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.

Romans 14:1-13

Most of us would agree that some very good things are going on in this flock these days ... holy things, supernatural things.

The Spirit of God is moving on us.

- Changes are taking place in our lives.
- Cleansing and healing are going on in individuals and families.

Only God himself can see what's going on in the heart. But from what we can see there has never been a time when more prayer has been rising to the throne, from hearts in this body, than in these days.

Many of us are renewing our commitment to the Lord and to the work he's called us to with our brothers and sisters here. But whenever there is a season of growth and life it's also a season of temptation.

After our Lord received the Spirit he was then tempted by Satan in the wilderness. After the Spirit fell on the believers at Pentecost they were exposed to trials and attacks from Satan they never experienced before.

- There was persecution ... chapters 3 and 4 of Acts Peter and John are arrested.
- There was the temptation to compromise... Acts 5....Ananias and Sapphires lied to the Spirit.
- There was division...Acts 6...between Greeks and Hebrews.

And all of these temptations also visit us with every fresh move of the Spirit of God. So in this present move of the Spirit upon us,

- there will be persecution,
- there will be temptations to compromise,
- already we see the signs of division among us,
- a division that does not come from the Lord.

There were people who walked out of here last Sunday (March, 1982) happy as bugs ... praising God for everything that went on.

There were people who went out of here last Sunday mad as hornets.

Both the bugs and the hornets love Jesus. There are deeply committed people on both sides of the issue. When you have this kind of division taking place you have to ask, "Is this of God?"

There is only one kind of division we can expect God to bring to an assembly of believers ...division over whether we are going to go on and follow and serve Jesus to the death. The sword of division over whether or not we're really going to follow Jesus will operate in the world and in the Body until the day of

the King's return. But division in the Body over any other issue is always the work of Satan and has to be recognized and dealt with as such.

Over twenty years ago the signs of division appeared in this flock on the issue of race. The Lord himself dealt with this division in an awesome way. And following his judgment on this division came much life.

Over ten years ago we saw the signs of division again. This time over the influx of street people. The Lord dealt with it and after his judgment came much life.

Now we have a new division taking shape over which is the right way to praise God. There would be no division if those who feel like praising God with their hands folded and their voices silent would go ahead and do that, and those who feel like praising God with their hands raised and their voices going would do that.

But when each group begins in subtle ways, and not so subtle ways, to try to make the other group conform to their way of praising God then we have division.

If the brothers and sisters with uplifted hands decide in their hearts that their brothers and sisters with their hands folded and their mouths shut are not praising God because they only sing when we announce the hymn, and if the brothers and sisters with their hands folded begin developing angry resentful thoughts in their hearts against these holie rollies who are making a spectacle of themselves, Satan has found a wide door ... and we've given it to him ... to come among us and win himself a victory.

The result of this division is that all worship, whether our hands are up or down, becomes self-consciousness. Unity is broken ... our vision of Jesus himself fades. His glory in our midst is hidden, not by a heavenly cloud which is glory itself, but by a fleshly cloud of self-righteousness,

- arrogance,

- unforgiveness.

Pretty soon we're so busy with our war over worship that the harvest field out there waiting for the harvesters begins to rot ... and the Spirit of the Lord withdraws from us in search of others who will get on with the job of living and proclaiming the gospel.

The Spirit will never withdraw from us over the issue of how many of us have our hands up or down,

or whether we're kneeling or standing,

or whether we're burning with a silent flame, or exploding like firecrackers.

But the Spirit will indeed withdraw from us,

- if we permit Satan to divide us over these things,

- if we grieve the Spirit with our arrogance and self-righteousness,

- if we fail to get out there with the gospel we've been given.

So, if we really want to give the Spirit of God freedom among us so that he can have his way with us ... all of us ... we have to nip this division in the bud before it gets rolling. How do we do that?

Simple:

- Repent. All of us: repent.

"What do I have to repent of?" you say. "I haven't done anything wrong. I'm among the obedient ones."

Every one of us has to repent of our attitudes to our brothers and sisters on the other side.

- If I'm a hands upper I need to repent of my attitude toward the hands downers.

- If I'm a hands downer I need to repent of my attitude toward the hands uppers.

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and every tongue shall give praise to God."

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Isn't it beautiful that in the apostolic church they had variety? Not just ethnic variety, not just cultural variety, but variety in the way they expressed and lived their faith in Jesus. And Paul is saying that this variety is holy ... it's of God.

Don't mess with this variety ... don't be trying to make everything uniform ... your way.

"Oh, but the Spirit has been calling us to praise God!"

Indeed, but did the Spirit specify that we all have to praise God in the same way?

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Romans 14

And in this the Spirit of the Lord is calling each of us to repent.

- He is not calling us to make our brother repent.

- He is calling us to repent.

If this means that you must get on your knees for goodness sake get on your knees...but don't be angry with your brother because he's still sitting in his seat and he's not on his knees.

"As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue give praise to God,"

Before the tongues can give praise, the knees have to bow. Meaning, that before we can truly be a people of praise we have to first be a people of repentance...each of us getting our eyes off his brother and sister and give an account of himself to God. How can we give an account of ourselves to God without repenting?

There are two ways you can give an account of yourself to God today.

1. "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are. Extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week. I give tithes of all that I get."

"God, I thank thee that I worship with my hands down."

"God, I thank thee that I worship with my hands up."

The only other way we can give account of ourselves to God is:

2. "God, be merciful to me, a sinner."

"I'm a sinner saved by grace. I'm a sinner washed in the blood and anointed by the Spirit... but I'm still a sinner. Whatever good may be flowing from my life is all from God. In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.

My attitudes,

my arrogance,

my impatience,

my unforgiveness,

my covetousness,

my sick imagination,

my vanity.... Lord God, forgive!"

The Spirit is calling for one thing and only one thing...

- Repentance,

....from each of us. When we offer him repentance with our whole heart he will lead us on to victories we never dreamed of. And even though we differ on so many things, we will be one!

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/richard-e-bieber/back-to-romans-14/>

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