



4. *Collective matters demand greater uniformity than personal convictions.* When it comes to what a church practices and teaches Paul always takes the position that congregations should be the same (1 Corinthians 1:10, 4:17). Yet the issues discussed here demonstrate that in terms of personal convictions on matters that don't demand working together as a church, there is some room for diversity. The goal must still be to understand and apply God's word uniformly. Yet as Christians work towards that goal we can bear with one another's convictions so long as they do not call upon us to violate our own.

would teach and bind the same kind of issues on others (Galatians 2:1-21). The Bible authorizes a softer approach towards the immature Christian than it does the teacher in error (Jude 22-23; Romans 15:1-2).



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ISSUE

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BULLETIN OF
THE OLSEN
PARK CHURCH
OF CHRIST

Faithful Sayings

December 23
2012



Services

Sunday: 9:30 AM
10:20 AM
6:00 PM
Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter
Jeff Nunn
Kyle Pope

Deacons:

Dean Bowers
Eddie Cook
Bill Davis
Steve Dixon
Jack Langley
Neil Ledbetter
Brady McAlister
Walker McAnear
Lance Purcell
Rusty Scott

Evangelist:

Kyle Pope

Issues of Conscience in Context

By Kyle Pope

What do Christians do when disagreement arises over God's word? This is an important question that is not easily answered. Given the fact that the Bible condemns fellowship with error (Romans 16:17; 2 John 9-11) the Christian faces the dilemma of having to determine for himself when differences must result in separation and when they can be endured.

The Apostle Paul in two of his epistles addressed situations in which the conscience of one believer led him in one direction while the conscience of another led him in a different direction. The two situations are dealt with in Romans 14:1-23 and 1 Corinthians 8:1-13; 10:23-33. Both deal with the matter of the eating of meats, yet from two different perspectives.

The Problem in Rome. We have no scriptural record of how the church in Rome was established, yet it is very clear that it was comprised of a membership largely converted from

Judaism. We see this from the emphasis placed upon the issue of circumcision (Romans 2:25-29); the definition offered of a true Jew (2:29); the appeal to Abraham as an example of righteousness by faith (4:1-4); the explanation of the Old Law's condemning influence (7:1-25); and the discussion of Israel's condition before God (9:1-11:36).

The question the Jewish Christian faced was this: *Were Mosaic dietary laws still binding?* The clear answer was no (Acts 10:15; 1 Timothy 4:4,5), but how were those who realized this to deal with new converts who still felt conscientiously obligated to follow Old Testament restrictions?

The Problem in Corinth. The situation in Corinth was somewhat different. Though some Jews were a part of its membership (Acts 18:8) the Jews of Corinth in large part had opposed Paul's teaching (Acts 18:12). This led Paul to turn his focus to the Gentiles (Acts 18:6). Both of his epistles address issues that the Gentile convert would struggle with more than the Jew (true wisdom vs. worldly wisdom – 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; speaking in tongues – 1 Corinthians 14:1-40; the resurrection – 1 Corinthians 15:1-58).

The Gentile convert faced this question: *Would eating meat that had been sacrificed to an idol constitute worshipping an idol?* Apparently in that day animals that were sacrificed in pagan temples would later be sold in the meat market for food (1 Corinthians 10:25). Gentiles viewed the eating of meat sacrificed to a false pagan god as worship of the god. While the Gentile Christian would understand that an idol was nothing (1 Corinthians 9:4) it might be that the new convert who saw another Christian eating such meat would imagine that it was being eaten as worship to the idol (1 Corinthians 8:10).



Olsen Park church of Christ

(Romans 14:1-23) **The Eating of Meats** (1 Cor. 8:1-13 & 10:23-33)

	Rome	Corinth
The Focus:	Jewish Christians	Gentile Christians
The Question:	“Are Mosaic Dietary Laws Still Binding?”	“Is Eating Meat That Was Sacrificed To an Idol Worship of an Idol?”

The Remedy. Although the problems were different the solutions were very similar. Paul says simply (to paraphrase) – *Don't let a matter of liberty cause a brother to stumble!* The Christian must be willing to sacrifice personal liberties for the good of a brother or sister in Christ. Don't eat if it causes offense (Romans 14:21-23; 1 Corinthians 10:24-33).

How is this to be applied to disagreements we face? A few points seem to be clear about the teachings of both Romans and First Corinthians:

- 1. We must never try to compel someone to violate his conscience.** While it is clear that a person's conscience can be misdirected (Acts 23:1) it is always a sin for one to violate his or her conscience (Romans 14:23). Teaching and study are proper but not compulsion.
- 2. We can not accept what is unlawful.** Paul was dealing with matters that had been clearly autho-

rized as lawful. Repentance demands putting away those things that are unlawful. Paul isn't suggesting here that if a new convert felt conscientiously that he could engage in sin, the mature Christian was simply to respect the conscience of the person and overlook the sin. He is dealing with liberties that can be surrendered.

- 3. More “leeway” is given to the immature.** While Paul teaches patience towards the young convert who might struggle with what he should or shouldn't do, he assumes a different posture towards the one who