

THE DANGERS OF DEFERENCE!

Romans 14:1-5

INTRODUCTION: Unity, in the Scriptures is a big deal with our Lord: Psalm 133:1-3; Ephesians 4:3; Titus 3:10-11.

I. THE IRONY OF EXCLUSION FOR THE PURPOSE OF UNITY!

Somewhat ironically our Lord tells us that in the pursuit of unity sometimes it means excluding people who are divisive. There really are times the only way to have peace in our union is to remove the peace-breakers. Relationships within our churches have always been and continue to be susceptible to discord and disunity. Anytime sinners, even saved sinners congregating there will be relational problems. One part of the biblical answer for maintaining unity is to practice deference. Deference is "submission or courteous yielding to the opinion, wishes, or judgment of another." Within biblically defined limits, deference is the right way for believers to relate to one another: Philippians 2:3-4; Romans 14:13-21. Our Lord expects His followers to live in peace with one another: 1 Thessalonians 5:12-15. In a world full of selfishness, surrendering our personal rights and yielding to others desires, while it is difficult is still a critical part of our testimony for our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. TRUE BIBLICAL BALANCE!

Remember that with every doctrine of Scripture there is a counter balancing doctrine of Scripture. With regard to the doctrine of deference there are biblical boundaries so that we may avoid the dangerous downside to our deference. If we don't use the clear biblical boundaries our desire to be courteous and to make room for divergent viewpoints can result in compromise and allow error to spread like a cancer among God's people in our churches. We must balance the Bible's teaching about deference with the Bible's teachings about the importance of personal convictions, the responsibility to confront error, and the proper exercise of church discipline. Romans 14:1-5: showing deference to others does not mean you give up your own personal convictions. It also means that you don't deliberately do things that you know will cause a problem in the area of disagreement: Romans 14:5-23. Deference never applies to the clear violation of biblical truth. Rather than defer to the opinions, wishes, and judgments of those who teach false doctrine, the Bible calls on us to expose, refute and reprove it.

III. DEFERENCE IS NEVER APPLIED TO CLEAR VIOLATION OF BIBLICAL TRUTH!

Titus 1:9-16. Deference also cannot be used to avoid the proper exercise of church discipline within the congregation and between congregations. Anyone who continues in a clear disobedience to biblical doctrine must be removed from the congregation. 1 Corinthians 5:12-13. Those who continue on in false teaching after having been rebuked must also be removed from membership: Titus 3:10-11; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18. Our Lord Jesus said very clearly: John 3:3. When churches teach that the Bible was not inspired by the Lord, that the blood of Jesus Christ cannot wash away our sins, that Jesus Christ was not virgin born, that God did not create all things, that salvation is not just by faith in Jesus Christ, that the Lord is not coming back to earth; should we not separate from them? We do believe in deference in debatable matters, but surely some matters are beyond debate. Where the Bible says "Thus saith the LORD," we must choose to not debate, but we must choose to stand with the inhalable Word of God!