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# Daily Devotional - Friday, December 20, 2024. - Rejoicing in Disagreement

DECEMBER 20TH 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Church splits are nothing new. For centuries, they have happened because of differences of opinion within the body of Christ. Often church divisions grow from different perspectives on important doctrinal issues. But personal taste or even petty disagreements can also grow into rifts that divide, disrupt, and even destroy a church family.

Early Christians experienced similar struggles. Jewish and Gentile believers in Christ sometimes had trouble accepting one another because of their differences. When Paul urged the “strong” to accept “the failings of the weak” in verse 1, he was referring to differences about things he described as “disputable matters” (Rom. 14:1)—disagreements mainly about abstaining from certain foods and the observance of certain sacred days (Rom. 14:2, 5). Paul described those whose lives were governed by such rules as “the weak.” Their conscience obligated them to obey laws that Christ had fulfilled by His sacrifice (Mark 7:19; Rom. 14:14).

Paul did not demand that all Christians agree on disputable matters but commanded that all believers accept one another as those accepted by Christ (v. 7). When we bear with the opinions and practices of others, we choose to “please our neighbors for their

good” rather than please ourselves (v. 2). There may be occasions when their weak conscience calls us to limit our freedom when in their presence (Rom. 14:19–23). It is wrong to force other Christians to go against their conscience. We may think we are doing them a favor, but in reality, we are causing them to violate their conscience and act contrary to faith. Their views need not shape our practice. And we shouldn’t force them to follow ours.

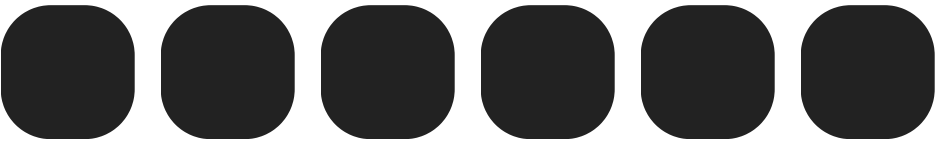
Can you think of a difference in church practice that is considered disputable or outside of core doctrine? Why does Paul urge believers toward unity despite these things?

Jesus, we pray for unity in our churches today! Give us discernment between differences in core doctrine and “disputable matters” that Paul mentions in today’s reading. Help us love and accept those accepted by You, Lord.

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