

Unity in the Midst of Diversity

Romans 14:1 – 12

I. Introduction

II. Differences in Practice Are Not to Hinder Love and Unity in the Church

A. Discerning the difference between doctrine and practice

Deuteronomy 6:4 – 7 "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise."

Ephesians 5:2 And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Romans 12:10 Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

Ephesians 5:3 But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.

B. Upholding unity when we differ in areas of practice

1. We are to accept one another even though our practices may differ.
2. We are to respect one another's convictions in areas of practice

1 Corinthians 8:4 – 8 Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that "an idol has no real existence, " and that "there is no God but one." For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"—yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do.

3. We are to remember that others are accountable to God and not to us in their practices.

1 Corinthians 4:4 – 5 For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.

III. Conclusion

"In essentials unity; in non-essentials liberty; in all things charity." – Rupertus Melaenius