

A YEAR OF DISPUTED MATTERS

²⁴ And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. ²⁵ Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, ²⁶ and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

II Timothy 2:24-26

¹⁰ You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat.

Romans 14:10

**“In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity.”
- Rupertus Meldenius**

I. Matters of conscience

- A. Matters of conscience are personal convictions regarding practices that are neither explicitly commanded nor prohibited in the Bible.
- B. Unity among believers is very important to our Lord. He died to secure it. (Ephesians 2:12-14)
- C. Our unity is the most important part of our witness to the world. (John 13:34-35; 17:20-23)

D. Important, but not saving truths.

* Sovereignty and free will; Modes of baptism; Church government; Political commitments, left or right; Biblical prophecy; Charismatic gifts; Roles of men and women in the church; Dress codes in the church; Divorce and remarriage; Church music; R-rated movies; Drinking wine with dinner; Translations of the Bible; End time scenarios; Etc.

II. Principles for handling disputed matters

A. Welcome those who disagree with you. (Romans 14:1-2)

B. Those who have freedom of conscience must not look down on those who don't. (Romans 14:3-4)

C. Those whose conscience restricts them must not be judgmental toward those who have freedom. (Romans 14:3-4)

D. Each believer must be fully convinced of their position in their own conscience. (Romans 14:5)

E. Assume that others are partaking or refraining for the glory of God. (Romans 14:6-)

F. Your freedom to eat meat is correct, but don't let your freedom destroy the faith of a weak brother or sister. (Romans 14:13-15)

G. Disagreements about eating and drinking are not important in the kingdom of God; building each other up in righteousness, peace, and joy is the important thing. (Romans 14:16-21)

- H. If you have freedom, don't flaunt it; if you are strict, don't expect others to be strict like you. (Romans 14:22a)
- I. A person who lives according to their conscience is blessed. (Romans 14:22-23)
- J. We must follow the example of Christ, who put others first. (Romans 15:1-6)
- K. We bring glory to God when we welcome others as Christ has welcomed us. (Romans 15:7)

III. The law of love

- A. Fulfill the law of love even when you disagree about specific requirements in daily conduct.
- B. Refrain from judging or condemning believers whose opinions differ from yours. (Romans 14:1-12)
- C. Refrain from expressing your freedom in ways that would pressure, embolden, or encourage another believer to sin by going against his own conscience. (Romans 14:13-23)