

The New Reformation 10: Matters of Personal Conscience

I. The Old Covenant was a covenant of outward behavior. The New Covenant is an inward covenant of the heart. Heb 8:8-10

A. Consequently church is about helping people feel loved, and then teaching them “the faith” (what Christians believe). Any sort of behavioral correction is meant to flow out of the relational connection brought on by the 1st 2 activities.

B. Being the behavior police, while perhaps nobly intentioned, produces bad fruit because it’s partnering with Old Covenant thinking instead of New.

II. Romans 14 is a powerful chapter that helps us to navigate disagreements about what behaviors are acceptable for Christians.

A) If you’ve ever wondered: Should Christians watch R rated movies? Listen to secular music? Wear a particular type of clothing? Eat Pork? Get a tattoo? Read Harry Potter? Drink alcohol? Do Yoga? Celebrate Halloween? Get a flu shot? Etc. Rom 14 is for you!

III. The New Covenant is about personal relationship with Jesus, which means that each of us has the Holy Spirit inside us, so we don’t need to be someone else’s Holy Spirit. The Scriptural pattern for dealing with these questions is:

A. If your conscience allows you to do something, then do it and be happy. Rom 14:22

B. If your conscience tells you not to do something, then don’t do it. Rom 14:23

C. In matters of personal conscience, we are not to judge one another. God is sorting people out. Rom 14:1-4

1. Judging is often the result of personal insecurity and the need to be right. As we find our security in the love of God and recognize that being right and knowing everything isn’t the goal, we can walk free from judgmental attitudes.

D. If you’re doing something that is causing your brother to stumble (even if it’s not wrong), you’re not walking in love towards that person. Rom 14:13-15

1. Some freedoms are meant to be expressed in private. Rom 14:22

E. There are things that are objectively wrong that we should avoid at all costs. Gal 5:19-21

IV. Example: there was a great controversy in Paul’s day about food sacrificed to idols. The problem was that the Gentiles came from a pagan culture where it was common for meat to be sacrificed to idols and then sold in marketplaces. Also, there were ritual feasts to idols that were part of the culture.

A. Some people’s consciences were offended at the notion of eating food sacrificed to idols. Other people’s weren’t.

B. Eating food sacrificed to idols doesn’t help or hurt you (unless it affects your conscience or someone else’s). 1 Cor 8:6-9

C. You aren't supposed to participate in an openly demonic ritual, however. 1 Cor 10:19-21

D. Modern example: Yoga

1. Should I do Yoga? If you're doing it as exercise and it doesn't bother your conscience, go for it.
2. If it bothers your conscience—don't do it.
3. Don't use your freedom to harm someone else (i.e. if it makes someone uncomfortable that you're doing yoga, don't invite them to your class).
4. Don't go to an openly "spiritual" yoga class where you're learning to commune with some spirit.
5. Whatever you decide to do, don't judge people doing the opposite.

V. Example: What day to worship on. Rom 14:5-6. Should I worship God on a particular day or keep a particular Holiday?

- A. Do what your conscience and your personal relationship with God dictates
- B. Don't impose your conscience on other people
- C. Don't turn day observances into a legalism.

VI. Example: Alcohol—Should I drink it?

- A. What does your conscience allow?
- B. How will drinking it affect those around you?
- C. Don't be drunk all the time. Eph 5:18

VII. The main issue in these things is we haven't believed 1 Cor 8:1. Imposing your conscience on someone else doesn't help them. Loving them where they are does.

VIII. The devil and his minions are nothing. Rom 8:4-6 Often our fear of certain activities etc. comes from an unhealthy view of the devils power.

- A. It's true that engaging in sin can give the devil a foothold in our lives and that he wants to wreak havoc. Eph 4:26-27
- B. It's also true that the devil is defeated. Col 2:15
- C. It's silly to do things to try to prove you're unafraid of the devil, but it's also silly to live in fear that he's going to "get you."
- D. Demons are dumb and unimaginative. Creativity flows from heaven, not from the devil.
- E. Evil will lose. Jesus is God; everything will be okay! Rev 19:19-20