

Respecting Other Interpretations

Last week we shared the substance of our core beliefs. Jesus is the Savior, God incarnate, who died for our sins. The Bible is God's revelation of truth to man. John 3:36 tells us that whoever believes on the Son has eternal life. Are there redeemed Catholics? Within each denomination or branch of Christianity there are issues you probably don't agree with. People in those groups don't necessarily agree with them all either. I know many Catholics who don't agree with a great deal of Catholicism, but they believe Jesus is the Son of God and that the only way to God is through Him. I also know Catholics that believe the only way to God is to confess to a priest and have the last rites when you die.

Within any group there are those who believe all the teachings and those who believe and interpret the teachings as they see them. If Catholics are trusting in Jesus' blood shed for them, they are as saved as I am. I am going to Promise Keepers with a Catholic man. He's as excited about it as I am.

Are there redeemed people and unredeemed people in our church? Only God can see the heart. Those who have placed their faith in Christ and what He has done for them are certainly redeemed. Others may be here because it is what their parents did, and they think they should, but they are trusting in church attendance and an intellectual ascent to the truth to earn heaven.

Can we conclude that in any Christian church there are those that are redeemed and those who are going through the motions? If that is true, what are we looking for in our fellowship? We look for the placing of our whole trust and faith in Jesus' work on the cross for us. That is where we find real spiritual brotherhood. Might I find that with my Methodist brother? My charismatic sister? Perhaps in my Seventh Day Adventist brother? Before we lump people in a certain group, we need to see if they share the core with us. Christianity is bigger than denominations and organizations, culture or language. It is a sharing of Christ.

Phil 2:1-3 (NIV) 1 If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.

If I am living out this passage, how will I approach someone from another Christian group? Where is the focus of my communication? If they should share a different understanding of a Scripture than that which I have, if it is not heretical, how should I respond? Shouldn't I respond to all things with the fruit of the Spirit?

Bringing that home to our own fellowship we will often have differences as to how to carry out the details of worship.

Let us read through Romans 14. Apparently the early church had a number of dividing issues. I'm sure some slaves had to work on Sunday. They may have met on a different day or even after their master was sleeping. Other Christians may have been condemning because they didn't meet on Sunday. Paul says, "It is not an issue! Just live according to your convictions unto the LORD." That was not an issue that affected the core beliefs.

In what ways do we judge another man's servant? (vs 4)

What are some of the meat and day issues today? (vs6)

Should we then not have any specific convictions on these side issues? (vs5)

What is meant by verse 17? Can you change that to the wording of issues you are familiar with?

What is the way of serving that pleases God? (vs 18)

Because that way is pleasing to God we should make every effort to (vs 19)

Read 'Who Loves a Wall' on pg 90 in *Primary Purpose* by Ted Haggard