

July 22, 2018

## ***Be Transformed***

***"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your reasonable act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."***

Romans 12:1-2

***"So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another...accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you in order to bring praise to God."***

Romans 14:12-15:7

Opinion is one of the most destructive forces at work for evil in our world. That is not to say that having an opinion is wrong, but what we too often do with our opinions is. An opinion is, by definition a personal judgment based on our own understanding. So, if I have an opinion about the price of a hotdog at one of the Town Pumps here in Anaconda, my opinion is my judgment about what I think that price should be.

Holding the opinion that the price of a hotdog is too high, is just fine. It is my opinion based on my understanding of a whole lot of factors. I am absolutely free to hold my opinion and even to let my opinion dictate my actions. For example, I might choose not to buy a hotdog at Town Pump anymore.

But, because it is only my opinion based on my own very limited judgment I cannot claim that I am right and anyone who disagrees with me is wrong. And, that is exactly where we get into trouble; especially when we bring our opinions into our relationships including the church.

In every relationship we have with others conflict is a major challenge. A conflict is more often than not, nothing more than one person's opinion being different from a second person's opinion when those two people share space and time in a relationship. As long as we are willing to acknowledge that our opinion is just that, our opinion, and that someone else's opinion is just that, their opinion, it is possible to maintain peace and unity in our relationships.

As soon as we decide that our opinion is right and any opinion differing from ours is wrong, then our relationships are going to be challenged by the resulting conflict. That is why opinion can be such a destructive force. As you might imagine this becomes a real issue in the church and it has been from the beginning.



Let me clarify here that there is a huge contrast between doctrine and opinion. Doctrinal issues nearly always involve direct and specific commandments. So treating others the way we would like to be treated is a direct and specific command. It is not open to opinion. When the Apostle Paul commands wives to submit to their husbands or husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the

church and *"...gave himself up for her..."* these are direct and specific commands. They are not open to opinion.

On the other hand opinion often comes into the church disguised as doctrine. If I have decided that I should not use the word "awesome" for anything but God that is fine; I have the right to hold that personal belief. I should then, follow my own beliefs and use that word only in reference to God. No problem. However, when I decide that when you use that word to describe the steak you had for supper last night and condemn you for the sinful use of that term, then I have misused my opinion.

Paul addresses this challenge for believers in his letter to the church in Rome. He writes, *"Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters...who are you to judge someone else's servant...Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way..."*

To keep our opinions from tearing apart our relationships we must, I believe, first acknowledge our own arrogance. Just because I believe something to be true does not mean that it is true. I am not that smart, nor am I that well informed. And, if I really believe that my way is the best way then I need to absolutely live by my personal beliefs.

And second we must decide that, as those who are being transformed by the renewing of our minds, we will not let our opinions hurt others or ruin our relationships. Being 'right' on *"disputable matters"* is never worth a valuable relationship. When Paul commands the Ephesian believers, *"Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."*, he is establishing a powerful doctrinal standard for all of us. Maintaining our unity can never be a matter of opinion.