

Are We Conservative Or Liberal?

I. Introduction:

A. Among the Jews there were various sects [parties] (**Acts 5:17** and **Acts 15:5**).

1. There was a sect known as the most strict (**Acts 26:1-5**).

2. The Sadducees were known as denying certain spiritual matters (**Acts 23:8**).

3. This mentality lead some to think they needed to label things to identify them in the area of religion (**Acts 24:1-5**).

B. There is a challenge in the desire to label. We know we are to identify those faithful and unfaithful (**Romans 16:17-18** and **Philippians 3:14-17**) and labels make that easier to do. I have long thought about this question we are going to study.

1. Whether or not something is expedient is certainly part of the process of determining right from wrong (**I Corinthians 6:12; 10:23**).

2. Are the lawful labels “faithful”, “brother”, “sister” sufficient (**Mark 3:31-35, Ephesians 6:21, Colossians 4:7, Colossians 4:9, and I Peter 5:12**)?

3. There are many, many, labels describing those unfaithful (i.e. **John 8:44, John 12:1-6, I Corinthians 5:11, Philippians 3:2, James 4:4, II Peter 2:1-3**, etc., etc.). Interestingly, “liberal” is not one of them.

II. Body: We Should Test If We Are Speaking As The Oracles of God (**I Peter 4:11**).

A. Considering the terminology...

1. The English word “conservative”, which does not appear in the KJV, is defined as: “Averse to change or innovation and holding traditional values” (Oxford New American Dictionary).

a. Is all change bad (**Titus 1:5, I Peter 2:1-2, and II Peter 1:3-11**)?

b. Are we to hold to man’s traditions (**Matthew 15:1-14**) or those revealed in the Scriptures (**II Thessalonians 2:15**)?

2. The English word “liberal” DOES appear in the KJV (**Proverbs 11:25, Isaiah 32:5, Isaiah 32:8, and II Corinthians 9:13**). The English word is defined as: “Willing to respect or accept behavior or opinions different from one's own; open to new ideas” (Oxford New American Dictionary).

a. The English definition does not fit the way the word is used in the Scripture. Example, in **Isaiah 32:8**: “voluntary, that is, generous; hence, magnanimous; as noun, a grandee (sometimes a tyrant): - free, liberal (things), noble, prince, willing ([hearted])” (Strong’s # 5081).

b. Aren’t there areas of liberty (i.e. **Romans 14:1-15:9**) wherein we must accept opinions differing from our own? Paul thought it unwise for the single saints in Corinth to get married, but understood the liberty of marriage (**I Corinthians 7:1-40**).

3. What about when certain subject matters begin to be tests of who is liberal or conservative? What about **Matthew 12:30**?

a. If you eat in the meeting place of the saints, are you liberal? What about the Lord's Supper (**Acts 20:7**)?

i. No, I am not saying congregations should host social meals. We do not assemble collectively, wherever that assembly takes place, for common meals or other social affairs (**Romans 14:17, I Corinthians 11:16-34**, etc.).

ii. Individual Christians need to use hospitality one toward another (**Romans 12:13, Hebrews 13:1-2**, and **I Peter 4:8-9**).

iii. Those that assemble as the work of the local church for such practices are not "liberal congregations." They are not God's people at all (**II John 1:9**).

b. Are congregations that oppose giving the Lord's money to anyone who asks for it "conservative?" No, you are just following the Scriptures (i.e. **I Timothy 5:3-16**).

B. The idea of going right or left are both wrong (**Deuteronomy 5:32, Deuteronomy 17:11, Deuteronomy 28:14, Joshua 1:7-8, Joshua 23:6, Proverbs 30:5-6, Galatians 1:6-12, II Timothy 1:13**, and **Revelation 22:18-19**).

1. We have to walk in a manner that pleases God rather than a manner in which we hold to some human ideology (**I Thessalonians 4:1-2**).

2. Was Jesus one who sought to be liberal or conservative? No, He did that which pleased the Father (**John 8:29** and **Hebrews 5:8-9**).

3. So we should not seek to be loose or strict, but rather to just be obedient children (**I Peter 1:14**).

C. Consider the danger of labels. Labels most often infer there are different sects in the body of Christ, but that is wrong (**I Corinthians 1:10-13**).

1. There is not a "conservative" and/or "liberal" body/church of our Lord. There is one body/church (**Romans 12:4-5, I Corinthians 12:12, I Corinthians 12:20, Ephesians 4:1-6, Colossians 1:18**, and **Colossians 3:15**).

2. If a congregation errs and doesn't repent, the Lord removes that congregation from its place (**Revelation 2:1-5**; cf. **1:20**). They are not liberal or conservative, they are gone!

3. Unless authorized, such as in areas of authorized liberties, different ideas/conclusion are division (**John 9:16**).

4. Unity comes from having the same love, being like-minded, following the same rule, etc. (**Philippians 2:2; 3:16**). *In addition to what we read already (**I Corinthians 1:10**).

III. Conclusion: We should be both liberal and conservative. We should not allow ourselves to fall into parties. Let's be content to be called what we see in the Scriptures "disciples" (**Acts 9:1**), "saints" (**I Corinthians 1:2**), "Christians" (**Acts 11:26** and **I Peter 4:16**), "the elect" (**Colossians 3:12**), "the church" (**Colossians 4:15**), etc.