
"We Are The Lord's"

ROMANS 14:5-9

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AT A GLANCE

Do you ever find yourself at odds with another Christian over deeply held convictions or beliefs? Does it make you want to just be done with them? Not so fast! In this week's passage, the Apostle Paul warns us not to be quick to divide over non-essentials and instead to remember that everyone in Christ belongs to the Lord. Let Him judge. You and I should instead assume the best in other believers, not the worst...difficult as that may be.

INTRODUCTION

I think I can say my sermon last week resonated with you! I got more feedback on that sermon than on almost any other. Maybe except my sermon on biblical principles that should govern our vote.

The truth is, you feel the tension I do when it comes to honoring the Lord with people whose convictions differ from yours. This really is a difficult concept. We want to feel like we have convictions and believe "the right" things. But as we saw last week and as we'll see again this week, much of what we differ over do not rise to the level of breaking fellowship.

The truth, as I said last week, is we're going to spend eternity with people with whom we disagree on just about everything. The only point of commonality for some of us will be our faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In today's passage, Paul addressed another hot-button issue in the Roman church: the observance of certain days. Seems not only did some of them restrict their diets, they also felt bound to observe certain days.

ROMANS 14:5-9

⁵ One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶ The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. ⁷ For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. ⁸ For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. ⁹ For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

ONE DAY AS BETTER

⁵ One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. It is likely that the Jewish converts in Rome not only felt constrained to eat only vegetables to prevent from eating meat sacrificed to idols out of gratitude for their salvation, but also they felt the most appropriate response to grace was to observe the Sabbath laws and Jewish festival days.

Once again it is important to note that had they taught, as the Judaizers did, that observing days or restricting one's diet was essential to salvation, Paul would have rebuked them as he did the Galatians. *"You observe days and months and seasons and years! I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain."* Galatians 4:10-11 It wasn't a salvation/gospel issue for the Romans.

Next, as we consider this verse, we should note that Paul is not affirming those who treat all days as secular. Rather, he is comparing those who treat one day, or certain days as holy, and those who treat all days alike, every day is holy; every day is to be lived for the glory of God. This was Paul's attitude for sure.

NOT AN EXCUSE TO BE LAZY

Whether it has to do with food or drink or observing certain days, these issues are open-handed issues and therefore are matters of conscience. However, this is no excuse to be spiritually lazy or sloppy. **Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.**

Notice what Paul did not say. He did not say, "If your conscience isn't convicted, you're good to do whatever you want." I heard that line about 10 years ago when a movie came out that was essentially a cinematized trashy romantic novel. I mentioned it in a sermon and warned people to avoid it.

In response I heard from several young women who told me their consciences were not bothered by watching it. As a young pastor, I was not prepared to respond to that. Being a bit more seasoned, I would now respond that Jonah was sound asleep in the boat when the waves were tossing it around. He was running from God and in the middle of a terrible storm at sea and yet he was fast asleep.

Its altogether possible that you can get to a place where sin doesn't conflict your conscience. I call it a seared conscience, but to the one in sin, it feels clear. That's a scary place to be. Paul did not say you're good to do what you want if your conscience doesn't convict you. He said, you must be **fully convinced in [your]own mind.**

What does it take for a Christian to be fully convinced in his own mind? It takes prayer, true accountability, and study of the Word. We should carefully and prayerfully consider why we believe what we believe about ambiguous matters.

Why have you landed on a particular conviction about an issue? We really need to explore that because it's possible to fall into a legalistic or licentious trap. It's possible to virtue-signal or rebel and call it a personal conviction.

You ought to be fully convinced in your own mind. If you're unwilling or unable to, you should probably hold off on making those convictions the standard of Christian faithfulness. Unfortunately, I have met people who were unwilling to carefully and thoughtfully process their personal convictions but were enthusiastic to make it the test of true religion.

There's an old Texas adage that goes something like this, "I don't smoke, I don't drink, I don't dance, I don't chew and I don't date girls who do!" What a virtue-signal! It's fine that you don't do those things, but it's not fine that you make *that* the religious test of Christian faithfulness.

And trust me, plenty of folks do. And some of these people are the most hateful you'll ever meet. 'They strain out a gnat and swallow a camel' to use Jesus' sarcasm. (Matthew 23:24) In other words, they completely miss the point.

MORE THAN FOOD OR DRINK OR DAYS

Paul, like Jesus, wasn't concerned with eating or drinking, or with days, but with a life fully devoted to the Lord. That's the point. **Verse 6 The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God.**

Paul is assuming the best of both sides, not the worst. He's giving both sides the benefit of the doubt. The point is this: in matters of conscience, the faithful position comes with a fully convinced mind and a grateful heart. If you're doing whatever you're doing with disregard to the Lord, and certainly if you're doing it against the conviction of the Holy Spirit, that's not Christian freedom. That's rebellion.

But coming back to Paul's point, this is a reminder that the Lord knows our hearts and minds, and importantly, He knows the hearts and minds of our fellow Christians. We can trust the Lord to deal gently with the wayward attitudes and practices of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

He very well may have us address something we see in our brother's life, speaking the truth in love, but we must never take a position of judgment on matters that the Bible leaves room for us to disagree.

WE ARE THE LORD'S

Why? **Verses 7-8**, says **For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. ⁸ For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.**

Do you hear that? **We are the Lord's.** Bottom line: Jesus is our Lord and theirs. If we are the Lord's, our lives belong to Christ, not ourselves. **We live to the Lord and we die to the Lord.** The faithful Christian life is one spent wholly and completely seeking the Lord's will and wisdom.

It could not be more clear: your life, your death, all of it, every part, every decision, every conviction, is unto the Lord. If you're in Christ, your life, in whole, not in part, ought to be laid down at the feet of Jesus. Why do you do this? Why do you do that? The right answer is because Jesus is your Lord and you belong to Him.

And why do you belong to the Lord? *"...for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."* ¹ *Corinthians 6:20* What was the price? The very life of Jesus Christ. You were bought with His blood. So give Him everything.

Verse 9 For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. Jesus is Lord of those who were and those who are and those who will be. For everyone who has called out to Jesus as Savior, Jesus is their Lord. You cannot know Christ as Savior and not submit Him as Lord. This is true of you, and importantly to the context of this passage, this is also true of your fellow servants. He is your Lord and He is their Lord. Remember Paul's question in verse 4, who are you to judge the servant of another?

While you can and should engage in friendly dialogue to share your position and possibly help a fellow servant navigate uncertain decisions in life, as 'iron sharpens iron,' Jesus doesn't need you to judge His servants.

THREE POINTS OF APPLICATION:

WHAT IS ESSENTIAL AND WHAT IS NON-ESSENTIAL?

Someone asked me this last week. We certainly do not want to flex or budge on things the bible clearly addresses. Sin issues, the Gospel, what the Bible reveals plainly is not up for debate. But there are things with which genuine Christians disagree.

We're going to spend eternity with people who defend tooth and nail God's sovereignty in election and with people who call those people heretics. With people who landed on both sides of the Covid shot and masking debate.

We're going to spend eternity with people who voted for Trump and people who voted for Harris. With people who like a little wine with their steak and those who have never let it touch their lips

and refuse to believe that Jesus turned water into *real* wine. With people who are vegan, vegetarian, carnivorous, and omnivorous.

We're going to spend eternity with people who served in the military in combat and those who would never point a rifle at another human being. With those who conceal carry in the worship service and those who wouldn't be caught dead with a handgun.

We're going to spend eternity with people who love hymns and those who love spiritual songs. With those who "look to the ant" and save for retirement and those who rely only upon the Lord's provision until the day they die.

The point is this: On judgement day the definitive question is not going to be about food, or drink, or days, or politics, or worship style, or anything else. The definitive question will be: Who did you say that I am? And the only acceptable answer is that of Peter, "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" *Matthew 16:15*

"For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day." *John 6:40*

This is a gut check. If the differences between you and another person will not end in one of you being eternally condemned, that's your brother. That's your sister in Christ. Welcome Him. He belongs to the Lord just like you do. One of you may be wrong, but you both belong to the Lord. Which leads to the next question.

HOW DO WE DISCUSS NON-ESSENTIAL THINGS WITHOUT JUDGING?

As I said last week, he whom God has welcomed we must also welcome. That does not mean we don't teach one another, and spur one another on to a more faithful understanding and application of scripture.

The doctrines of the Lord are glorious and full and deep! They reveal to us who the Lord is and what He has done for us and what He would have us do in response. The idea of non-essentials is not an excuse to be lazy in our study of the Word, but more thorough and, importantly, more humble.

Paul is addressing judging others, rejecting them, separating from them. One can believe the Gospel and have an underinformed or misinformed understanding of their freedom to eat meat, or he may feel the need to observe a day, or have misunderstandings about other non-essentials as Paul has clearly shown us here in Romans 14. It may be that through your loving and patient instruction, he comes to enjoy his freedom in Christ.

She may exercise her liberty in Christ to drink alcohol, but you recognize that she is using it to medicate her pain. She is free in Christ, but she is enslaved to the drink. Love compels you to go to her and help her see that.

There is certainly room for brothers to challenge one another's convictions and explore what the bible has to say and to take a good look at our lives. Paul's rebuke was not that we keep from discussing or debating these things, but that we not "quarrel" over them. Quarreling implies division and judgment and mean-spiritedness. You can dialogue about important things without being mean-spirited and divisive.

HOW SHOULD WE THINK ABOUT THE LORD'S DAY?

The question was asked last week about how we should think about the Lord's Day. Some here have experienced a view of the Lord's Day that restricts just about any other activity than gathering with the church. So, I'd like to speak to that in the heart of Paul's writing to the Roman church, some of

whom felt they needed to protect certain days while others lived with the mindset that every day was special to the Lord.

First, I want to establish that the idea that a Christian can live a faithful, God-honoring, Christ-exalting, Spirit-led life isolated from other Christians is mistaken. The entire assumption of the bible, from beginning to end, is covenant community. God has established *a people*; a royal priesthood, a holy nation.

The end of the Gospel is not your individual salvation, but Christ's establishment of a body, of a nation, of a family. *"That He might be the firstborn among many brothers."* Romans 8:29

Second, we are commanded not to neglect the gathering of the saints, *"not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another..."* Hebrews 10:25a This is a command in scripture, not an ambiguity. But, I want to make sure we understand the heart. If you conceive of going to church like going to school – as an obligation by law, and for primarily selfish gain (your own edification, growth, knowledge, etc) I can see how one could arrive at a place where they convince themselves a Sunday or two each month is all they "need." But that's the wrong premise.

We're not told, "Don't skip church." We're told to not neglect the meeting together. The heart of that command is community. The prohibition is against depriving the body of your presence and your contribution. Don't withhold your loving commitment to the community of believers.

Your being with us is an encouragement to us and I pray we are an encouragement to you. The author of Hebrews continues by adding, *"and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."* Hebrews 10:25b As we near the end, we know life as a faithful Christian is going to grow more challenging. The local church is a group of Christians all trying to love and encourage one another and spur one another along. We need each other. We need each other's encouragement, not judgement.

Now, having established why we prioritize the gathering, not out of legalistic obligation, but for relational edification, I'd like to simply quote Jesus regarding how we are to think about the Lord's Day, that is the Sabbath. *"The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."* Mark 2:27

What was the context of Jesus' statement? His disciples were walking through the wheat fields, plucking grain and grinding it between their fingers and eating. The Pharisees, being the legalists they were, rebuked Jesus, saying this is not lawful. Jesus' retort was simple and to the point: God gave us the sabbath to bless us, not oppress us. It was given to remind us of His provision, goodness, and love. It is a gift.

Are there people in the church today who need to re-evaluate their hearts regarding the first two points, the relational edification of the gathering, and need to reprioritize gathering together? Absolutely.

But, the gathering isn't a law to be observed. It's a blessing to be enjoyed. Gathering together on the Lord's Day is not a task to complete. It's a response to God's gracious gift of redemptive community.

A CLASSIC WORD OF WISDOM IN CLOSING

As we wrap up this section of Romans 14, the general warnings against judging others over non-essentials, I'd love to leave you with this classic word of wisdom, "In things essential, unity; in things non-essential, liberty; in all things, charity."

Brother and sister, we are the Lord's. If we are in Christ, if we know Him as Lord and Savior, we belong to Him, each one of us. We can be sure He will judge our fellow servants justly. We can leave that to Him. Amen?

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