

Romans

I. Living Godly In The World & Church

A. Romans 14:1-12 . . . Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions. [2] One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only. [3] The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him. [4] Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand. [5] One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind. [6] He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. [7] For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; [8] for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or 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. [10] But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. [11] For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall give praise to God." [12] So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.

B. Review:

1. The essence of Paul's message in Romans 14:1-15:13, is that Christians can differ on the practice of the non-essential freedoms we have in Christ – as to which ones they approve or disapprove. However, these differences are never to be a cause for judging those freer in faith as sinners for doing what the weaker in faith won't do. And they are not to be a cause for looking with contempt on those weaker in faith because they disapprove of the freedoms the freer in faith are enjoying. Rather, in all these kinds of differences, there is to be love, mutual respect, and unity.

C. Our primary focus today will be on four principles that we are to apply when dealing with each others differences on the non-essential freedoms we have in Christ.

D. Prayer

II. Living godly in the church in the face of non-moral differences

A. Romans 14:4 . . . Who are you (this is referring to those weaker in faith) to judge (decide the failings and guilt of) the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls (his master is the only judge that matters in these kinds of issues); and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

1. Back in Romans 6, Paul makes it clear that we either serve sin or we serve God. Therefore, we are slaves to someone – whoever we serve. Now if we are servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, then our primary task is to do the will of our Master.

a. Paul reinforces this truth a little further down in Romans 14:7-8, “For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; [8] for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

b. The point here is that when it comes to how the freer and weaker in faith handle the non-essential freedoms we have in Christ, the weaker – who take a more cautious or conservative stance on some of those freedoms – are not to judge and condemn as sinful or ungodly those who participate in all the freedoms we have.

(1) And the reason the weaker are not to judge the freer in faith is because the freer only answer to their Master concerning their behavior in these non-essentials.

(2) However, I want to remind you that there are other places in the NT that make it clear that there are sinful behaviors and ungodly ways that the individual Christian is accountable to the Church leaders and the church members (Matthew 18:15-17; Romans 15:16-17; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; Galatians 6:1; 1 Timothy 6:3-5; Titus 3:10-11).

c. Now since we serve our Lord Jesus, and since in God's eyes the freer in faith Christian is doing nothing wrong, and since he only answers to his Master on these kinds of issues, his Master (the Lord Jesus Christ) will keep him in good standing before God by affirming his innocence and confirming he is has been justified and is being sanctified.

2. Before leaving vs 4, I want to point out three implied facts concerning the ability Christians have to live the way Paul is exhorting us to live.

a. First, Paul implies that the Christian who is weaker in faith is fully capable of identifying the difference between the sinful things other Christians are doing and the God acceptable things

they are doing – regardless of what the weaker Christian feels he is free or not free to do.

- b. Second, (and this is a three part implication) Paul implies the weaker Christian is fully capable of identifying his own judgmental attitude, words, and actions. Then Paul implies the weaker Christian is capable of putting a stop to them, and replacing them with an approving acceptance of the spiritual genuineness of the freer Christian. And finally, Paul implies the weaker Christian is capable of doing this while continuing to remain faithful to his conscience in refusing to participate in some of the freedoms he has in Christ.
- c. Third, Paul implies that on non-moral issues of this nature, each believer answers only to the Lord – rather than to the Lord and the church leaders and church members.

B. Romans 14:5 . . . One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind.

1. Paul's example is straightforward and so I will add only one minor explanation. There is nothing in this context or in any other NT scripture that frees us from regarding the Christian Sabbath – or what by then had become the Christian Sunday – as a special day in regard to our relationship with God and the life of the church.
2. Then, after describing the areas of possible difference, Paul presents the first of four principles for dealing with each other in regards to these non-essential differences. And this first principle deals with making the decision as which freedoms we will affirm and which we will reject as wrong for Christians to participate in. Each person must be fully (completely, entirely) convinced in his own mind.
 - a. In other words, in these kinds of matters of conscience and conviction we are to think for ourselves, we are to examine our conscience on the matter, and then we are to decide what is right for us – according to what our conscience will allow.
 - b. This is an important principle because it protects our conscience, our personal godliness, and the unity of the church. How so?
 - (1) First, it protects the integrity of our conscience and our commitment to personal godliness by guarding us against such threats to our spirituality as (1) fear of what others think of us, (2) the ungodly desire for acceptance and approval from others instead of from God, and (3) the weakness of character

that prompts those with this weakness to compromise almost anything in order to be counted as part of the in-group.

- (2) Second, this principle produces convictions that are sincere, and this is important because sincere convictions on non-essentials are easily respected, and those who hold them are easily accepted as equals.
 - c. In writing to the Colossians, Paul affirmed that we are to live according to our convictions. Colossians 2:16-17 . . . Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day— [17] things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.
3. The NT gives us a very practical example of Christians in the early days of the church failing to live according to this principle. And interestingly, the two leading participants in this situation were Peter and Paul. This situation is recounted by Paul in Galatians 2:11-14.
 - a. Galatians 2:11-14 . . . When Cephas (Aramaic for Peter) came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. [12] For prior to the coming of certain men from James (Jesus brother and a leading elder in Jerusalem), [Peter] used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision (Jewish Christians who were insisting salvation was by faith plus circumcision). [13] The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas (who had disciples Paul and taken Paul with him on his journeys) was carried away by their hypocrisy. [14] But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles (now that he is a Christian) and not like the Jews, how is it that you (are joining those who) compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?"
 - b. Once again, the principle that is to rule over our decisions regarding the non-essential freedoms we have in Christ is each person must be fully (completely) convinced in his own mind.
- C. Romans 14:6 . . . He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God.

1. The second principle Paul lays down sets the boundaries for how we are to understand each person's decision on each of the freedoms we have in Christ. And the principle is best stated in two parts:
 - a. If the decision about observing or not observing days is sincere, then it is to be regarded as a decision to please and live for God.
 - b. If the decision about eating or not eating is sincere, then it is to be regarded as a decision to please and live for God, and the proof of the sincerity of the decision is that both groups, the eaters and non-eaters, give thanks to God for what they eat.
2. So let me summarize the first two principles:
 - a. Our decisions of which non-essential freedoms we will practice and which ones we won't are to be based on being fully convinced in our own mind and supported by a clear conscience.
 - b. Whether we observe days or refuse to eat certain things we are free to eat, or whether we treat all days alike and eat all things, what we are doing we do unto God – and that fact adds to the reason the various decisions are to be respected and the unity of the church protected.

D. Romans 14:7-9 . . . For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; [8] for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or 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.

1. This is the third principle presented by Paul for dealing with the differences among Christians in relation to the non-essentials. And here again, it is best to break this principle into two parts.
 - a. The first part of this principle establishes that no one lives for himself, and no one dies for himself. Therefore, whether we live or die, we belong to and are seeking to please our Lord through our submission and service to Him.
 - b. The second part of this principle establishes the reason we Christians do not live or die for ourselves – for as Paul says, “to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.”
2. The first part of this principle is clear enough to need no further explanation. However, I want to point out that the second part of the principle takes for granted that we, the reader, understand two truths regarding Christ and our salvation. And those two truths I want us to look at for a few minutes.

- a. First, upon repenting and coming to faith in Jesus Christ, we hand ownership of ourselves over to Him, and we become His possession – because He purchased us with His blood.
 - (1) This truth is clearly stated in 1 Peter 1:18-19, “knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, [19] but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.”
 - (2) And Paul states it this way in 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, “For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; [15] and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.”
 - b. The second truth this principle assumes we know is this: We owe the debt of sin, which is eternal separation from God. And the only way unrepentant sinners can pay it is to spend eternity in hell. However, when we die as Christians, we are not dying for ourselves to pay our own sin debt. Rather, our death opens the way for the ultimate fulfillment of Christ’s purpose in purchasing us – which is to live a reconciled and perfectly righteous life with God for eternity.
- E. Romans 14:10-12 . . . But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. [11] For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall give praise to God (Isaiah 45:23)." [12] So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.
- 1. Paul is not done presenting principles for dealing with this issue of non-essentials. Here in vs 10-12, he presents the fourth principle – and this one deals with not judging each other on matters that are non-essential because we all have to give an account to God for our choices and behavior on that final judgment day.
 - 2. Without question, this fourth principle is just as important as the rest when it comes to having the right perspective and attitude for dealing with Christians who are either freer or weaker in faith than we. But in the face of eternity, this principle stands out as a warning for all who expect to live with God for eternity.
 - 3. But let’s return to our context, and in its context, this principle is clearly stated in the words of vs 10 and 12, “Don’t judge, because we

- will all stand before the judgment seat of God.” This single statement has two implications that are important to keep in mind.
4. First, there is no need to judge others in the church on non-essential matters because God will handle that at the right time.
 - a. And the right time is at the end of our life, not here and now. Why? Because healthy Christians naturally keep changing for the better. Therefore, even if I am weaker in faith now, as I continue to grow, I will, in time, become freer in faith.
 - b. This means that to judge a weaker Christian now for being unspiritual is like judging a 6th grader for not knowing algebra. Just as we would give the 6th grader time to advance in his learning, so we are to give Christians time to advance in their learning when it comes to non-essentials.
 5. The second implication in this final judgment principle is that everyone – rebellious sinner, willful unbeliever, weak in faith Christian, and mature Christian alike will stand before God the Judge and give an account of their choices and behavior.
 - a. And here is a reason to take seriously the words of Romans 13:11-14, where Paul presses us to live wisely and purposefully right now so that we come to the end of our days in as holy a condition as possible. In other words, we are foolish to do anything less than pursuing a growing, maturing faith to life’s end.
 - b. You see, God waits until the end of our lives to make His final judgments, for it is the end that shows how far we have come, and how much we have changed, and to what degree we have taken God seriously, and to what measure we have pursued being holy in all our behavior as He is holy, and whether we have loved Him.
 - c. The point here is that as long as we are alive, we have the opportunity to press on in becoming all that Jesus saved us to be. So take courage, and be encouraged to continue pressing on.

III. Conclusion

- A. In this section of Romans, Paul gives us four principles for dealing with each other in relation to non-essentials. May we love each other, and respect each other, and support each other, and in so doing, preserve the unity of the Body of Christ.