

9/7/11

THE EPISTLE LESSON Romans 14:1-12

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*(St. Paul calls for discernment to love others.)*

**1 Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters.**

2 One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. 3 The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him. 4 Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

5 One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. **7 For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. 8 If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.** 9 For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.

10 You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. 11 It is written: "'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.'" 12 So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. **13 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.** 14 As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean.

THE GOSPEL LESSON Matthew 18:21-35

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*(Jesus teaches about passing on His forgiveness.)*

21 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" 22 Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

23 "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. 25 Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. 26 "The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' 27 The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

28 "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. 29 "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' 30 "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt.

31 When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. 32 "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. 33 Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?'

34 In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. 35 "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

**The Sermon**

**“Holy People Loving, Not Judging”**

**Romans 14**

Difficult, why can some eat meat and others not, why do some worship Sundays and others Saturdays

Simple, part of love, don't judge in disputable things

**7 For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. 8 If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.**

Wisdom for living as brothers and sisters

INTRO 6 Do you remember the violence and fighting in Ireland between the Catholics of the IRA and the Protestants? I remember such violence in the 60s and 70s which stopped. But then it started up again in the 80s and 90s. But, this is not something just in our lifetime. There was great violence in the early 1900s. In fact, such fighting between Christians can be traced back into the 1800s. What causes such fighting between Christians?

- I. Unfortunately, and you can write this down, there has often been disagreements and fighting between and among Christians.
  - A. If you look in Scripture you will find many such sad examples.
    1. In Acts 15 there was a dispute between those who thought new Christians needed to be circumcised and obey the ceremonial Jewish laws about worship, and others who believed in freedom under Jesus, especially for Gentiles not originally under such laws. A Conference was held that solved this dispute, sort of. But, many of Paul's letters talk about these different groups of Christians that judged each other and then disagreed.
    2. If you read the end of Acts 15 you hear about a dispute between Paul and Barnabas.
    3. Philippians 4 talks about a disagreement between two women, Euodia and Syntyche.
    4. Do you hear all the disagreement? And this is only the tip of the iceberg.
  - B. Today's lesson tells the Romans what not to do. **1 Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters.**
    1. The reason Paul had to say this is that there was judgment between Christians in the 2 areas mentioned here.
    2. Should we eat meat or not? The result was that different ideas led to a division among Christians.
    3. Should we worship on Saturday or Sunday? The result was that different ideas led to a division among Christians.
    4. You see, there was much judgment and many disagreements that Paul dealt with.
  - C. Unfortunately such disagreements continue.
    1. Christians disagree about things in Scripture such as the sacraments, the end times, and how we are saved?
    2. But, Christians also disagree over traditions like worship, or playing games, or drinking.
    3. Unfortunately, when we are dealing with sinful people, there will always be disagreements. But, these disagreements and lack of unity give a bad witness to the world.
    4. Where is the wisdom to agree and work together in serving the Lord?
- II. That is what Paul is talking about today, and what seems very complex really can be made very simple. Should we or shouldn't we eat meat? Should we or shouldn't we worship on Saturday or Sunday? Where is the wisdom to work together doing God's work? Paul says 2 things that simplifies how Christians act and can help us avoid such disagreements and divisions
  - A. First of all he tells us what not to do. **1 Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters.**
    1. Paul is not telling us not ever to judge. There are areas where that is necessary. We judge actions.
      - a. We can judge if someone has spoken a curse word, has disobeyed parents or authority, has committed murder, or committed adultery, or stolen.

- b. These actions are wrong, but God does forgive when someone who repents of their sin
  - 2. We cannot judge however in disputable matters.
    - a. That might be the motive of someone else. Why did someone eat meat, or celebrate the Sabbath on another day? Why did they curse, or disobey, or hurt another?
    - b. Actually, this applies to the fighting in Ireland. Not only were actions being judged, but so were the motives, the heart. Only God can judge that.
    - c. Another disputable matter is in areas of doctrine.
      - i. If the Bible says Jesus is the only way to heaven, and someone else says everyone is going to heaven, and ignores Scripture, well, that obviously causes division, because it deals with what the Bible obviously says.
      - ii. But, there are areas where Christians look at a verse, agree that verse is God's word, but disagree about what God means. In this situation it is good to be humble and remember that we are not God. We may continue to believe we understand God's word correctly. We may ever agree to disagree.
    - d. But be wary of judging as if we are God.
- B. Secondly, Paul tells us the area for agreement. Verse 7 and 8 say, **7 For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. 8 If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.**
  - 1. When we make a decision on how to live, are we choosing to live for God?
  - 2. Jesus died for us and rose for us. He put his self interest away to serve our need, when we were lost in sin and condemned to death.
  - 3. Jesus lived and died for us, are we living for Him?
  - 4. When we live for Jesus, our motives are love ó God's love for us that moves us to love others, not judge.
- C. So, God teaches us He is the in disputable matters, and the judge of motives. Each of us should live for the Lord by loving.

CONCLUSION ó Through the 1990s and 2000s the violence in Ireland has subsided. This was perhaps more because of on-going political effort than faith based. But, in the long run Christians who took their faith seriously realized that God's children who are called to love, should not be fighting. This has not been an easy process, but it is working for now and the result is a better witness to the world. Not only are we to love one another, but those who have disagreed can love one another because we know Jesus.

God's simple wisdom in this complex issue, says, **"Don't pass judgment in disputable matters"**, GOD is the judge of motives. BUT, each of us should judge ourselves whether **we live for the Lord.**