

Series Title: Truth Unashamed, Part 6- How then shall we live?

Sermon Title: Week 3: The weak and the strong

Date: 05-26-19

- **LAST WEEK- Bill Loveless... Free to Love**
- **Fit perfectly with where we are in Romans- last section of book... ethics... HOW THEN shall we live. Answer... live out of LOVE. Fulfillment of law.**
- **AND LOVE is...**

† **Loving God and Loving People It's getting personal!**

- **Flesh statement out a bit two simple/ BIG concepts...**

- **If we love God we will live in OBEDIENCE to God**

John 14:15 *"If you love me, keep my commands.*

- **Not necessarily obedience to religious culture, but to GOD... his WORD, his WORK in us... this isn't set of rules, but lifelong relationship....**
- **AND- underlying point of R14...**

- **When our love of God leads to a love of people, we will grow in a transforming self-awareness of how our LIVING impacts other people.**

GOD awareness leads to SELF awareness which leads to OTHER awareness

- **OTHER awareness not out of sense of insecurity, performance, but love and compassion. LEADS TO:**

† **The matter at hand: Romans 14 – 15:3 and *The weak and the strong***

- **CONTEXT Paul is teaching into. THEN, as now, the church was not, nor intended to be, homogeneous- all like in how we think, our priorities, what we do. The body of Christ in the word is INCREDIBLY diverse, and it is too our detriment when we, as followers of Christ, self-segregate into people just like us.**
- **BUT this can be hard, for when we are different, there often arise tensions over the answer to the question "HOW THEN shall we live". This was the case in the church in Rome... points to bigger reality...**
- **!! It is easier for us to place our individual faith in Christ for salvation, than it is to work through the hard problems that arise when we endeavor to live out the implications of our faith in a society that IS NOT christian, and ALSO in groups of Christian that come from different backgrounds and perspectives on issues of lifestyle.**
- **!!HERE IN ROMANS 14 Paul speaks to how we are to live with other believers who LOVE THE LORD but do not see how WE are living/doing as the idea way of living out the christian faith.**
- **HERE, Paul speaks to two groups- two groups that always will be found, in many different amounts and forms, but sharing the broad characteristic of "WEAK" and "STRONG" in their faith**
- **KEY. When Paul speaks here of 'weak' and 'strong' faith, he is not speaking of sincerity of people's faith in Christ. Far from it actually. In this narrative, the 'weak' and 'strong' both are seen as deeply loving the Lord and desiring to be true followers of Jesus..**
- **And yet, for these sincere believers in Rome, there was an issue that evidently was becoming a problem.**

- **SOME** people found it fine to eat meat.
- Others, for a reason we really don't know, ate only vegetables.
- If you've studied this, you know parallel passage in 1 Cor 8. There issue was eating food sacrificed/idols. However, that doesn't seem to be issue here.
- Other issue Paul cites- some thought some days were more sacred than others, while others believed everyday to be just the same.
- **THE ESSENCE** is that some people in the church- the 'weak'- had what we could call an overabundance of 'SCRUPLES.'
- Scruple- "a feeling of doubt or hesitation with regard to the morality or propriety of a course of action"
- For whatever reason- be it tradition, culture, or life experience, some people see certain things or actions as not being appropriate for them as followers of Christ, while OTHERS (the strong), have no problem with these things at all-
- **AND** we should add... nor does scripture. Paul calls them 'disputable matters'. Things that are neither moral nor immoral on their own, and yet some see them as being immoral while others don't.

- The characteristic dividing the 'weak' and the 'strong' is the **FREEDOM** that flows from **FAITH** in the fullness of what God accomplished in Christ.

- Paul sums this up in text for next week...

Romans 14:14a *I am convinced, being fully persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean in itself.*

- In 1 Cor 8, "idol is nothing, eating means nothing"

- **WHEN WE BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND** the fullness of our justification before God, and that this totality of forgiveness, new life, righteousness, is by **FAITH FROM FIRST TO LAST**, we will see that questions such as whether or not we eat certain kinds of food, or use certain instruments in worship, or whether or not we dress up for church... other disputable matters- these are meaningless.

- For Paul, the **WEAK** had not fully grasped the fullness of this miracle, and still carried 'scruples' about the appropriateness of some things that really were morally neutral.

- **HERE'S THE THING.** Paul **DOES NOT** use this text to tell the 'weak' to mature and change their perspective. **RATHER**, to both the **W&S**, he tells them to **ACCEPT EACH OTHER.**

- ✠ The power of acceptance

Romans 14:1-4 *Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters. ² One person's faith allows them to eat anything, but another, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. ³ The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them. ⁴ Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand.*

- **Verse 4: The 'master' is God, and we are all his servants. If God has accepted another as his servant, who are we to reject them, just because we see differently on a disputable matter?**

- **We are able to STAND in life- prevail, live free, not because everyone else agrees with us, but because our source of life is God.**

- **Here we see the problem BOTH the weak and strong are can fall into- and it's a temptation NOT TO LOVE.**

- The strong *do not love* when they look down on the convictions of the weak

- The weak *do not love* when they pass judgement on the freedom of the strong

Reality! Regarding the ‘weak’ and ‘strong’, Paul’s concern is not who is RIGHT, but how they relate to one another.

When it comes to ‘disputable’ matters, the key goal is not AGREEMENT, it is ACCEPTANCE.

- *Old church saying “In essentials, unity, in non-essentials, liberty, in ALL, charity”.*
- *But what are ‘disputable/non essential’ matters when it comes to how we live out our faith? What does a church do when people don’t even agree on which matters are essential and which are non-essential? We will get into this more next week, but the foundation Paul lays is the great importance of an individuals conscience before God.*

✠ A matter of CONSCIENCE

Romans 14:5-6 *One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind. ⁶ Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord. Whoever eats meat does so to the Lord, for they give thanks to God; and whoever abstains does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God.*

- *One of our most precious possessions is the integrity of our heart- our conscience- before God. A person cannot live at peace with God when we are living in violation of our conscience before God.*
- *QUOTE- to go along with what others do simply because they do it, without being convinced for oneself can be a dangerous practice.*
- *LIKEWISE, it is a serious matter to cause or tempt another person to violate their own conscience.*
- *WHEN IT COMES to matters of how we live before God, Paul calls us to be fully convinced in our own convictions, before GOD.*
- *IMPORTANT- Paul here isn’t talking about disagreement over simple ritualism or just openly legalistic matters- he is talking about sincerely, deeply held moral and spiritual convictions.*
- *Jewish believer may keep the Shabbat/Sabbath...*
- *Example of a meal- a meat eater and vegetarian- both thank God for their meal- their conviction isn’t to each other, but to God.*
- *This leads to a bigger point... as followers of Christ, even though we are called to live in community, to love each other, to worship together, serve together, support one another... ULTIMATELY we live before...*

✠ The Audience of ONE

Romans 14:7-12 *For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone. ⁸ If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for 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.*

- *Paul’s point is simple. We belong to God! We are NOT an island unto ourself. CHRISTIAN/BIBLICAL worldview- We were born into this life in the sovereignty of God, we came to know Christ as Lord through the sovereignty of God, and we will pass into eternity with Christ within the sovereignty of God!*
- *“Returned to life... sprang to life”.. The purpose of Christ’s resurrection is that we would know him as LORD, that our life is IN HIM. End of Romans 11: For from him and through him and for him are all things.*
- *IF THAT IS TRUE, why would we judge each other!*

¹⁰ *You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you treat them with contempt? 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 acknowledge God.'”¹² So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God.

- **Judgement- BIG topic. We all will stand before God to give an account for our lives, but IN CHRIST this is not a day to be feared, because our righteousness, our salvation, hope is IN CHRIST. But Paul’s point here is not the details of judgment day- save one- ON THAT DAY, we will not give an account of our life to each other! TO GOD!**
- **BECAUSE THIS IS TRUE, SOMETHING LOVE...**

✝ Love *doesn't...* **IT DOESN'T JUDGE**

Romans 14:13a *Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another*

- **Wisdom/Boundaries/Teach-grow YES. JUDGE, no! This is where we will pick up next week**