

Day 125, Romans 14

by David Servant

David Servant's sermon emphasizes the importance of love and respect in navigating differing personal convictions among believers.

Scripture: Romans 14:3-17, 1 Corinthians 8:9, Galatians 5:13, Colossians 2:16, 1 Thessalonians 5:22, 1 Timothy 5:21, James 4:12

Topics: "Christian Unity", "Personal Convictions"

Description

David Servant preaches on the importance of respecting and loving one another despite differing personal convictions, using the example of believers in Rome and Corinth who had conflicting views on eating meat sacrificed to idols. He emphasizes the need for mutual respect and understanding, rather than judgment and contempt, among believers with varying convictions. Paul's message in Romans 14 highlights that the kingdom of God is about righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, not about non-essential matters like food or drink. The sermon addresses contemporary issues like Sabbath-keeping, alcohol consumption, and holiday celebrations, urging Christians to be fully convinced in their own minds and to prioritize love and respect for one another.

Transcript

This chapter is about scruples. We all have them to a greater or lesser degree. We often refer to them as our "personal convictions." We have them because we love God and don't want to do anything that would offend Him. The problem is, we don't always agree on our convictions. Then we fight, forgetting that we should all have a personal conviction about loving one another!

In Rome, just as in Corinth, there were believers who had misgivings about eating meat that had been sacrificed to an idol. Some apparently had decided not to eat any meat at all, lest they run the risk of eating some that may have been sacrificed to idols. So they were vegetarians for Jesus! They loved Him, and wanted no association with idolatry. Like anyone whose convictions are motivated by love for the Lord, they deserved to be admired.

Then there were those who felt otherwise about eating meat, and among them was Paul. They knew that the Lord was not offended by eating meat that had been sacrificed to an idol. But the differences of believers' convictions resulted in problems. Imagine two believers sitting down at a restaurant to eat a meal together. One orders a steak and the other is shocked. He wonders out loud how his brother in Christ can profess to love God yet risk eating meat that has been dedicated to an idol! An argument

begins and both stand up and walk out.

Or, perhaps a worse scenario is this: One orders a steak and the other, who thinks such a thing is wrong, goes ahead and orders a steak himself, succumbing to temptation because he was strengthened by the example of his friend. As he eats, however, his conscience condemns him. Thus, even though he is not technically sinning by eating meat, he is sinning because he is doing what he believes is wrong.

The remedy for all this is not forcing one person's convictions upon another, an impossible task. Rather it is love between differing parties. "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" (14:3). And none should consciously do anything that might cause his brother to stumble. Both should respect those whose convictions differ.

Paul mentions an example that is contemporary to our day: "One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind" (14:5). He must be speaking of keeping the Sabbath. Sabbath-keepers do indeed have some very good arguments. Yet there are no admonitions in the New Testament epistles for Christians to keep the Sabbath. Undoubtedly, there will never be universal agreement on this issue, at least until Jesus returns (and after that, most Sabbath-keepers say, all of His followers will keep the Sabbath according to Isaiah 66:23!). In the meantime, Sabbath-keepers and non-Sabbath-keepers should love and respect each other for their convictions.

Paul puts these things in their proper perspective when he writes, "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (14:17). When the entire focus of one's Christian life revolves around what he eats and drinks, one is way off balance. Our life in Christ is all about righteousness (that which is founded in God's Word), and peace and joy, all which stem from the indwelling Holy Spirit. How we are apt to be side-tracked by non-essentials that overshadow the essentials!

The lawfulness of drinking alcohol is one of those issues that divides sincere Christians. Everyone should be convinced in his or her own mind. (Drunkenness is, of course, a sin.) Opinions often differ about the celebration of certain holidays, such as Easter and Christmas, as well as our Lord's proper name (Yeshua? Jesus?). For all these, we need to apply the wisdom found in Romans 14.

Finally, it is outrageous to claim, as some do, that Paul's words have application to "strong" Christians whose consciences allow them to do what God clearly forbids in His Word.

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