

ROMANS (14:5-9)

Fully Convinced
PART 80 – AUGUST 27, 2006

DIETS AND DAYS

Last week Paul talked about a big dispute in the early church that put the Jewish Christians on the defensive.

- Gentile believers criticized the “careless” Jews for buying and eating meat that had been sacrificed to pagan idols.
- Jewish believers countered that the “superstitious” Gentiles were avoiding the meat out of fearful respect to false gods.

The eaters “looked down” on the non-eaters, and the non-eaters “condemned” the eaters, and this created much disorder ... I think it’s the first documented case of an “eating disorder”! Paul’s response was strict and straightforward:



- Don’t pass judgment on disputable matters! (*Rom 14:1*)

It’s Satan’s “job” to criticize and condemn the members of God’s family. When we do it, we’re doing the devil’s work for him.

Paul now turns the tables, and brings up a dispute that puts the Gentile Christians on the defensive.

- Jewish believers criticized those “rebellious” Gentiles for not conforming to the customary Judaic holy days and rituals.
- Gentile believers countered that the “ritualistic” Jews were dragging old-covenant legalism into new-covenant liberty.

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. 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. For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. 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. For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living. - *Romans 14:5-9 NIV*

BACK TO WORK

This issue hits a little closer to home:

One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike (14:5a)

There are sincere believers who expect me to preach against the pagan practice of Christmas and Easter. People left our church when I said that Christian households should hand out the *biggest* candy bars on Halloween! But this is nothing compared to the emotions that surrounded the holy days that God Himself instituted ... especially the *Sabbath*.

There was the not-so-minor matter of this Old Testament verse:

Observe the Sabbath, because it is holy to you. Anyone who desecrates it must be **put to death** ... - *Exodus 31:14 NIV*

Q: So, how can Paul say that we can just take it or leave it?!

Q: And why did Jesus say He was "Lord of the Sabbath"? (*Mat 12:8*)

We need a quick sidebar on the Sabbath:

In six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth ... but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. - *Exodus 20:11 NIV*

But then, Jesus openly violates the Sabbath by plucking wheat with His Disciples (*Mat 12:1-2*), by healing an invalid, and *then* by telling the man to pick up his mat and walk (*John 5:8-10*).

So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him. Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working." - *John 5:16-17 NIV*

Q: Do you see the Sabbath-shattering revelation in this response?

- God went back to work on His creation!

"My Father is always at his *work* to this very day"

"I, too, am *working*"

When sin corrupted the first creation, God went back to work on a new, *redemptive* creation. And He didn't *rest* again until He declared - on the cross - that it was finished!

The Old Covenant *Seventh-day-Sabbath* foreshadowed – and was replaced by – the reality of a New Covenant *Savior-Sabbath*.

Therefore do not let anyone judge you ... with regard to a religious festival ... or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. – *Colossians 2:16-17 NIV*

So, the way we enter and honor our true rest, is by ceasing from “works” and trusting in “the Lord of the Sabbath”. And that’s why Jesus said:

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. –
Matthew 11:28 NIV

Now, this doesn’t prohibit believers from setting aside certain days to worship God and express Christ’s redemptive authority. The early church met on Sundays (*Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2*) (the day Christ rose from the dead) to declare God’s *new* rest in Christ.

Still, some felt obligated to observe that old Sabbath. While others felt it overshadowed the reality of Jesus. But look at how Paul tells them to deal with their differences:

Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind (*14:5b*)

Isn’t this like trying to put out a fire with gasoline?! “All you believers who disagree, let’s not back down in our beliefs! Everybody come to a clear conviction; take a stand. Put on the gloves. Let’s go!”



Yet, this is *exactly* how we *begin* to deal with our differences:

- We must cultivate our own convictions.

Paul is rightly discerning the dangers of unexamined traditions and ignorant or inherited “spiritual” behavior. But, what should we be “fully convinced” of? Fully convinced that you’re wrong? Or, what I chose will get approval from people? Or, that I’ll look wise and holy?

Paul makes it clear what we must be “fully convinced” of:

He who regards one day as special: “Does so to the Lord”

He who eats meat: “Eats to the Lord”

And he who abstains: “Does so to the Lord”

Whatever I choose to enjoy or avoid - to eat or abstain from - I *must* be fully convinced that I am expressing genuine trust, honor, and obedience to the Lord.



Being fully convinced protects me from being taken “captive” by the convictions of other Christians. You shouldn’t be held hostage by *my* beliefs. I’m *not* to “fully convince” myself that mine is the *only* way to honor God or avoid sin ... but that it’s the best way for *me*.

- This will give me a well-informed posture of *humility*.

And both eater *and* abstainer: “Gives thanks to God”

- Both sides are gratitude-based and God-centered.



And this is why I can sincerely do something for God, and you can sincerely do the *exact opposite*, and we both have His approval! Aren’t you glad your rewards won’t be based on what other believers think of you?! God examines the heart and judges the motives.

We’re faced with a choice: *My* will or *Thy* will be done. His *Lordship* is ultimately what we choose to receive or reject. Do your choices declare *His* Lordship, or your own? For followers of Christ, our will will always be secondary.

For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord (14:7-8a)

Q: And, do you know why this is?

A: We don’t belong to ourselves!



So, whether we live or die, we *belong* to the Lord (14:8b)

He bought us. He owns us. And we are *His* possessions! He paid the price for our right to rest in Him. When I *know* I “belong” to Christ, I won’t be any man’s hostage; and I will not fear or be controlled by the opinions of others.

I will find my rest in Christ, both in this life and eternity:

For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living (14:9)

My focus is not first on my pleasures, but on pleasing my Lord. I belong to Christ! Therefore, I will examine my lifestyle, my conversations, my diversions, and my habits.

And I will weed out whatever I am not fully convinced brings Him honor from a grateful heart.