

115. The Book of Romans 14:7-9

Paul's Epistle to the Romans
A message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier

(2-25-26)

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This evening in our study in Romans we are in Chapter 14 where Paul is dealing with division in the church in Rome.

Romans 14:1–5 (NKJV)

¹ Receive one who is weak in the faith, *but* not to disputes over doubtful things. ² For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats *only* vegetables. ³ Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. ⁴ Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand. ⁵ One person esteems *one* day above another; another esteems every day *alike*. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.

The issue that Paul is stressing here is—UNITY. Unity in the Body of Christ is not only important—it's essential for victory over the enemy.

Satan knows that only too well, that he can't defeat us unless he first divides us—which is why his main strategy against the Church has always been, "*divide and conquer!*"

There is strength and victory in unity, which is why Satan wants to destroy the unity in our churches through petty bickering over non-essential doctrines.

Now the thing that Paul focuses on that was dividing Christians in Rome was legalism.

- Legalism has been a problem in the Church ever since its inception.
- Legalism attempts to be made right with God based on externals (observing religious holy days, keeping sacraments, punishing yourself as a show of piety, observing Lent etc.).

One of the main problems with legalism is that—some in the church want to make their *convictions* about spiritual and moral things a *universal* mandate for all Christians to adhere to. This gives them a sense of self-worth by making them feel spiritually and morally superior, leading them to look down on others that don't follow their example—just like the Pharisees in Paul's day.

As we said last time, the believers in Rome were dividing over *diets* and *days*—(eating meat sacrificed to idols and observing the Sabbath):

Romans 14:6–8 (NKJV)

⁶ He who observes the day, observes *it* to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe *it*. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks. ⁷ For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. ⁸ For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

Notice how that 7 times in these 3 verses Paul stresses that Jesus is the **Lord** of their lives and of their church.

He stressed that in these verses because he wanted to impress upon the Christians in Rome that they were subject to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and needed to maintain unity for His sake—because He as our Lord commands it! (Ephesians 4:25-32)

The problem is that most Christians call Jesus '**Lord**' as a *name*, instead of using the word '**Lord**' as His title—the title for the One who controls their life. Those who *call* Jesus Lord but don't *submit* to Him and obey Him (as the general pattern of their life)—are deceiving themselves about belonging to Him:

Matthew 7:21–23 (NKJV)

²¹ "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. ²² Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' ²³ And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

Listen, no one is saved who doesn't call Jesus Lord—and no one can truly call Jesus '*Lord*' who has not relinquished control of their life to Him as their Master (more and more as they grow).

Many *professing* Christians *call* Jesus 'Lord' (as a name) but don't *obey* Him as Lord—Jesus called them out on this—

Luke 6:46 (NKJV)

⁴⁶ "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say? [speaking to phony disciples]"

Now, that doesn't take into account that there are *carnal* Christians in the Body of Christ. A carnal Christian is basically a Christian whose fallen, carnal nature is still dominating them rather than the new nature in Christ that is being controlled by the Holy Spirit.

Carnal Christians are immature Christians who are saved but are not submitting to Jesus on a regular basis as the Lord of their lives. These people are often selfish and self-willed and tend to create a lot of division in the Church—

1 Corinthians 3:1–3 (NKJV)

¹ And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual *people* but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. ² I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able *to receive it*, and even now you are still not able; ³ for you are still carnal. For where *there are* envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like *mere* men?

When believers don't relinquish control of their lives to the Lordship of Christ in all areas of their lives—it not only robs them of blessings in heaven but also creates all kinds of problems for them here on earth.

Submitting to Jesus as Lord is the quality of a Spirit-filled Christian—an evidence of their love for Him—

John 14:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ "If you love Me, keep My commandments..."

In other words, Jesus is telling His followers—"*If you say you love Me—prove it by obeying Me!*"

If I were to ask all of you—'How many of you Christians love Jesus'—no doubt all of you would immediately raise your hands. But what if I then asked you—“How many of you are in love with Jesus?”—I think a good number of you wouldn't be able to raise your hand so quickly—if at all.

Some of you are probably thinking to yourselves, “Well I love Jesus—*isn't that enough!*?”

No, because I love my sister, but I'm in love with my wife—and everyone here knows the difference between loving someone (as a friend or relative) and then being in love with them. Being *in love* with someone expresses a whole different level of love than does friendship or even family love.

There are things I would do for my wife that I probably wouldn't do for someone else in the way of sacrifice and service. This is what Jesus was stressing in John 14:15 when He said, “*If you love Me then obey Me*”—in other words, the level of our obedience to Jesus will be directly tied to how much we love Him.

Which begs the question—how much do we love Him and what kind of love do we have for Him—is it friendship love (fondness, affection) or are we truly *in love* with Him as our Bridegroom (the deepest kind of love between human beings)?

This whole subject is tied to spiritual warfare—

1 John 2:15–16 (NLT)

¹⁵ Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. ¹⁶ For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world [*this fallen world system controlled by the devil and at war with God and the people of God*].

Victory in spiritual warfare is very simple—if you're going to be a victorious Christian, if you're going to overcome the devil, the world, and your flesh, you must obey the Lord Jesus. And if you're going to consistently obey Jesus as your Lord—you must love Him supremely above everything and everyone else—

Mark 12:30 (NKJV)

³⁰ *And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.* This is the first [the supreme] commandment.

In other words, you must be in love with Jesus.

So much of our defeat in the Christian life is because we're trying to have victory *in our own strength* because it will benefit *us* in some way.

In other words, losing weight will cause me to look better; stopping smoking will help me live longer, etc. It's not that losing weight and stopping smoking are bad things (they're not) but let's be honest, our love for Jesus really isn't at the heart of those desires—self-love is motivating those desires.

And when that happens, when Jesus really isn't our first love (self is), all kinds of problems result—problems that many Christians don't even realize are tied to their lack of obedience to the Lord Jesus.

Let me come at this from a slightly different perspective. So many Christian couples have marital and/or financial problems, and they come to church wanting the pastor to basically fix their problems from the pulpit or in counseling—but a pastor can't fix a problem, that really doesn't exist.

You might be thinking—“*What in the world are you talking about?!*”

Show me a husband who doesn't cherish his wife, who doesn't sacrifice himself for her according to God's command to him in Ephesians 5:25-28, but instead is always demanding that she submit, submit, submit like some kind of hired servant—and I'll show you a man who doesn't have a *marriage* problem—he has a Lordship problem!

By the same token, show me a wife who doesn't respect and submit to her husband according to God's command to her in Ephesians 5:22-24, but is always challenging him, who seldom if ever submits to him when she disagrees with the decisions he makes—and I'll show you a woman who doesn't have a *marriage* problem—she has a Lordship problem!

Likewise, show me a Christian couple who have spent themselves into financial debt to the point of bankruptcy by buying everything they see and 'can't live without' in disobedience to Jesus' command not to lay up treasures on the earth but to use their resources to lay up treasures in heaven by supporting the work of God's Kingdom—and I'll show you a couple who don't have a *money* problem—they have a Lordship problem!

We could apply this to many of the issues and problems we face in our Christian lives.

- Show me a Christian who harbors resentment and bitterness or even hatred in their heart for members of different races, political affiliations, towards co-workers, their boss or towards those who have hurt or wronged them in some way.
- Show me a Christian like that who can't seem to get along with people, and I'll show you a Christian who doesn't have *relational* problems—they have a Lordship problem.

Remember it was the Lord Jesus who commanded us as Christians to love one another (John 13:34-35)—it was the Lord Jesus who even commanded us to love our enemies. (Matthew 5:43-45)

If your love for Jesus is not greater than any differences you have with others—be it marital, political, racial, economic, or any other issue or conflict you may have with another person, but refuse to die to self with regard to—then make no mistake about it, you don't have a *people* problem, you have a Lordship problem.

When we refuse to love and forgive people who have hurt us or wronged us (especially our spouse), the problem isn't with them—the problem is with us. What is the problem? Let's just be brutally honest—we are demonstrating a self-love problem—we are loving ourselves more than we love Jesus! We are flat out demonstrating that we are not in love with Him but are more in love with ourselves!

Whether we realize it or not—self-love is at the heart of all our problems in marriage and in our Christian lives in general.

This was at the heart of the division going on among Christians in Rome—they were more in love with themselves than they were with Jesus which was reflected in their rebellion of not obeying Jesus as their Lord.

And this rebellion was manifesting itself in their dividing and fighting over issues like '*diets and days*'—

Romans 14:5–8 (NKJV)

⁵ One person esteems *one* day above another; another esteems every day *alike*. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶ He who observes the day, observes *it* to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe *it*. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks.

⁷ For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. ⁸ For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

The Lordship of Christ permeates every area of our lives as Christians—as someone has said, *“Either Jesus Christ is Lord of all or He isn't Lord at all!”* And while it is true that what we do and say does affect others—that is not the primary thought that Paul is expressing here.

He is emphasizing that the Lord should be the goal and object of the lives of His people.

One author put it this way—

“In verses 7 and 8 Paul is emphasizing the principle that everything we do in life is subject to Christ's scrutiny and approval. We test things by how they appear in His presence. Even in death we aspire to glorify the Lord as we go to be with Him. Both in life and in death we belong to Him.”

Paul went on to stress this in verse 9 of Romans 14:

Romans 14:9 (NKJV)

⁹ For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

Paul is stressing here that if they as Christians truly loved Jesus and were obeying Him as Lord—division would cease and unity would prevail. You see, Paul knew that division was the symptom whereas not honoring Jesus as Lord was the root problem—and Paul didn't want to focus on the *'symptom'* he wanted to address and *'cure the disease.'*

I also see this in young couples in marriage.

Division in the churches was something that Paul dealt with a lot—including and especially with regard to the church of Corinth—a church he wrote 2 letters to on the subject of love and unity:

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 (NKJV)

¹⁴For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; ¹⁵and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.

1 Corinthians 10:31 (NKJV)

³¹Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. [Do it for Jesus' sake]

William MacDonald—

“One of the reasons for which Christ died and rose and lived again is that He might be our Lord, and that we might be His willing subjects, gladly rendering to Him the devotion of our grateful hearts. His lordship continues even in death, when our bodies lie in the grave and our spirits and souls are in His presence.”

Warren Wiersbe—

“An interesting illustration of this truth is given in John 21:15–25. Jesus had restored Peter to his place as an apostle, and once again He told him, *“Follow Me.”* Peter began to follow Christ, but then he heard someone walking behind him—it was the Apostle John.

Then Peter asked Jesus, *“Lord, what shall this man do?”* Notice the Lord's reply: *“What is that to thee? Follow thou Me!”* In other words, *“Peter, you make sure you have made Me Lord of your life. Let Me worry about John.”*

Whenever I hear believers condemning other Christians because of something they disagree with, something that is not essential or forbidden in the Word, I feel like saying, *“What is that to thee? Follow Christ! Let Him be the Lord!”*

In verse 9 Paul stated the theological reason for his exhortation for Christians to stop judging one another—we are all going to stand before the Lord Jesus someday and give an account for the life we lived for Him during our time on earth.

This will happen when He comes for His Church at the Rapture and will judge—**"the dead and the living" (verse 9) alike—**

2 Timothy 4:1 (NKJV)

¹ I charge *you* therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:

1 Peter 4:5 (NKJV)

⁵ They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

Romans 14:10–13 (NKJV)

¹⁰ **But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. ¹¹ For it is written: "As I live, says the Lord, Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God."** ¹² So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. ¹³ Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in *our brother's way*.

Paul mentions this judgment of believers in 1Corinthians chapter 3—but before we look at that judgment, I'd like you to turn to 2Corinthians 5 so we can set the record straight on a misconception many Christians have (because this is what they were taught) on the subject of coming judgment—

2 Corinthians 5:1–11 (NKJV)

¹ For we know that if our earthly house, *this tent*, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ² For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, ³ if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. ⁴ For we who are in *this tent* groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. ⁵ Now He who has prepared us for this very thing *is* God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. ⁶ So *we are* always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. ⁷ For we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸ We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. ⁹ Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. ¹¹ Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.

The Greek word translated '**judgment seat**' in verse 10 is the word '*bema*'.

This word was used of the judgment seat at an athletic event like the Olympics where athletes would appear before the judge (who was seated on an elevated platform) to receive their prize or award for winning an event.

Paul no doubt had this in mind when he said in 1 Corinthians 9:24—

1 Corinthians 9:24 (NKJV)

²⁴ Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain *it*.

Of course, the context is that Paul is admonishing all believers to go all out in their 'race' for Christ so that someday they may receive a great reward.

Now many pastors teach that this judgment is only for believers to receive their rewards—and therefore isn't punitive (punishment for breaking laws and condemning a person to hell). However, the word 'bema' was more commonly used in the N.T. to describe a judicial judgment seat as in a court of law.

It was used of the judgment seats of Pilate (Matthew 27:19; John 19:13), Herod (Acts 12:21), and Festus (Acts 25:6, 10, 17).

There was also a *bēma* at Corinth, where unbelieving Jews unsuccessfully accused Paul before the Roman proconsul Gallio (Acts 18:12, 16, 17).

One historian said this—

"A person was brought before a bēma to have his or her deeds examined, in a judicial sense for indictment or exoneration".

Now I bring this up because I believe that Paul has more in mind when he said in 2Corinthians 5:10—

2 Corinthians 5:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

I believe when he said, *"we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ"* he has in mind all humanity not just believers in Christ. I believe that because he says people are going to have to answer for the things they have done while on the earth whether "good or bad".

Those who will be judged for the good is a reference to Christians for which the Judgment Seat of Christ will only be for the handing out of rewards.

There will be no punitive action taken against us there since all of our sins were paid for by the blood of Christ—so it's all good, although probably not without some tears over wasted opportunities for the Lord or service done with the wrong motives (1 Corinthians 3).

However, the word 'bad' is the Greek word '*kakos*'. In the New Testament *kakos* is translated, *"evil or wicked"* and refers to one who is "evil in himself and, as such, leads others into evil".

In a moral sense the word means, *"wicked, vicious, bad in heart, conduct, and character."*

I believe that this judgment seat of Christ is the judgment of unbelievers called the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15).

This judgment of course *will be* punitive and all who appear before it will be sent to hell a.k.a. the Lake of Fire.

Now you might be thinking, *"How do we know that Jesus will be the One judging at the Great White Throne Judgment and not the Father?"*—

John 5:21-22 (NKJV)

²¹ For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to *them*, even so the Son gives life to whom He will. ²² For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son,

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower—please reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

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