

Last week we discussed two issues that Paul brought up, diet and days. There were believing Gentile and Jews in the early church and as one might expect they had different upbringings.

Many Gentiles grew up in and around pagan temples.

Then there were people that esteemed one day over another.

The *bible doesn't address every situation you'll encounter in life*, that's when you have to decide whether or not this will please the Lord.

Paul speaks to the weak in the faith:

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 (bema seat 2 cor 5:10) of Christ.

People were disputing over non-essential.

Rom 15:14

14 Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

Paul goes on to say that we will stand before the judgment seat of Christ,

In the NT "bema" refers to the judgement of believers for their works.

Festus and Pilate were each in positions of judging.

The judgement seat Paul speaks of is for the believer.

He said in Galatians 5:6 that our works should be motivated by love and faith.

He also said in Corinthians that our works would be tested

1 Cor 3:11-15

11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. 14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

2 Cor 5:10 speaks of the same judgment seat as Romans:

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.

Here is the good news!

- You and I will appear before the “Bema” seat of Christ

Paul often referred to sports:

- 1 Cor 9:24, he says those who run in a race all run but one receives the prize
- 1 Tim 6:12 He says to fight the good fight of faith
- 2 Tim 4:7 End of his life: I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith,

Sports were a big deal during the Roman times. And every 3 years the Corinthians had contests in a stadium just outside of Corinth known as the Isthmian games.

- These games lasted several weeks, much like the Olympics of today.

When we stand before the Lord, it won't be for punishment,

- but we will receive rewards,
- the scriptures call them crowns.

There are 5 such crowns mentioned in the NT.

1. The Imperishable Crown: 1 Cor 9:24-25, Paul says to 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. 25 And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.

1 Peter 1:4

4 Peter said that we'd receive an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,

2. The Crown of rejoicing: 1 Thess 2:19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?

See Phil 4:4 and Luke 15:7

3. The Crown of Righteousness: 2 Tim 4:8 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.
4. The Crown of Glory: 1 Peter 5:4 and- Says: when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

Rom 8:18: For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

5. The Crown of life: Rev 2:10 Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

James 1:12 tells us that the crown of life is for all who love God.

Again, when Paul speaks of the judgment "seat" no doubt he was referring to the *bema seat*. In the end, you and I will not face God's wrath but His grace and we will be rewarded with crowns!

11 For it is written:

"As I live, says the Lord,
Every knee shall bow to Me,
And every tongue shall confess to God."

Paul is quoting from Isaiah 45 and Philippians 2:11.

- All people will bow down to God

In John 21 when Jesus restored Peter and He asked Peter, do you love me and Peter says yes, you know that I love you. But what happened next was very interesting.

Peter turned around and saw John following, and Peter asked Jesus, what about him?

Jesus replied, if I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? He says to Peter, you must follow me!

Jesus was telling Peter, you have to make it personal.

And that's what Paul says in the next verse:

12 So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.
Eccl 12:14 said, 14 For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.)

13 Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, (He's literally telling them to STOP!

Quit judging one another.

Paul says not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way.

There are 4 different words in Greek for judge:

- krínoē; - judicially condemn, Matt 7:1 Judge not, that you be not judged.
- Dokimazo - to prove or test something out Rom 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.
- Anakrino - Is meant to ask questions. 1 Cor 2:15 says that He that is spiritual judges all things. In other words, he that is spiritual asks questions about everything. See Luke 23:14
- Diakrino - to cut thru, to discern. 1 Cor 6:5-6 I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren? 6 But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers!

Rom 14:14-23

14 I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

15 Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died.

16 Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil;

17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

18 For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men.

19 Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.

20 Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense.

21 It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak.

22 Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.

23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.

14 I know and am convinced (perfect tense, I'm fully convinced. But notice who convinced him) by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

The Jews had a strict code and some still follow that today. They only cooked with certain dishes at certain times in order to be kosher.

Mark 7:1-4 TLB

1 One day some Jewish religious leaders arrived from Jerusalem to investigate him, 2 and noticed that some of his disciples failed to follow the usual Jewish rituals before eating. 3 (For the Jews, especially the Pharisees, will never eat until they have sprinkled their arms to the elbows, as required by their ancient traditions. 4 So when they come home from the market they must always sprinkle themselves in this way before touching any food. This is but one of many examples of laws and regulations they have clung to for centuries, and still follow, such as their ceremony of cleansing for pots, pans and dishes.)

5 So the religious leaders asked him, "Why don't your disciples follow our age-old customs? For they eat without first performing the washing ceremony."

The religious leaders weren't concerned about hygiene,

Unfortunately many people today feel as though

- they need to clean up before coming to Christ.

God is not looking for clean people to change,

15 Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, (if you're causing your brother pain or distress) you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died.

16 Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil;

17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. (we should live our life by our relationship to God) (others need to do the same)

18 For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men.

19 Therefore let us pursue (chase down) the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.

20 Do not destroy (don't demolish) the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense.

In verse 14 Paul said that food can and does become unclean - Now he's saying that

- food can and does become evil

We've heard the phrase, "the shoe is on the other foot".

Paul told the Gentiles in Galatia not to follow the customs of the Jews, that was not necessary!

Now Paul is appealing to those that are happy to eat or drink anything they want (again, probably Gentile Christians).

They've gone from one extreme to the other!

Now he's saying, hey, there are occasions when

- you need to hold back from this freedom otherwise you may cause someone to stumble.

If you and I do that to others,

- then we're **undoing** the work of the cross because
- Paul said in verse 17 that the kingdom of God
- is not eating and drinking,
- but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

21 It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak.

Extreme love is great when we, or someone we know, limits their liberties because of their love for Christ and for others.

22 Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves (dokimozo - test).

23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.

Do you see how important your conscience is! (con - with, science - knowledge, with knowledge)

- This is what brings conviction to our heart.

If you're questioning something, that may be your conscience telling you not to do it.