

"The Doctrine of Consecration"

Part 15

Romans 12:1-15:7

**Introduction:** Last week in our study of Romans we stepped into chapter 14 briefly and began to look at what Paul's concern was in this portion of Scripture. Paul is focused upon unity within this chapter. He is concerned about the divisions that often come between strong believers and weak believers. In Ephesians we find several verses that are a great lens in which to view Romans 14 through.

**Ephesians 4:1-6**

*I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,*

<sup>2</sup> *With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;*

<sup>3</sup> **Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**

<sup>4</sup> *There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;*

<sup>5</sup> *One Lord, one faith, one baptism,*

<sup>6</sup> *One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

Here in Ephesians Paul is stating that we are one body, so we are to endeavor to keep the unity OF THE SPIRIT.

Last week we started by looking at how the church is never to allow sin to exist in order to preserve the unity. Sin will keep the church from moving forward and eventually it will destroy a church. The Bible is very clear that sin must be judged within the church.

We also began to look at the two current issues of Paul's day which he will reference in this text.

1. Diet
2. Days

**Diet** - This was an issue in the early church because of both the Gentile's and the Jew's backgrounds. The Gentiles had been saved out of pagan worship. In the worship of the pagan gods, they sacrificed animals which were consumed by the pagan priest and the worshipper. The meat that was left over was sold in the marketplace and there were some

who did not see a problem eating meat sacrificed to idols and there were others who wanted nothing to do with it and their conscience convicted them of eating the meat.

Then there were the Jews who were saved and many of them brought with them the dietary restrictions given to Israel under the Law. There were some who had no problem eating whatever was offered and there were others who saw it as a sin to eat certain things which the Law had forbid.

There was a tension which existed in the early church because of this. We can see in Galatians.

**Galatians 2:11-14**

*<sup>11</sup> But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.*

*<sup>12</sup> For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.*

*<sup>13</sup> And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.*

*<sup>14</sup> But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?*

Peter had no problem eating the food of the Gentiles and enjoying fellowship with them, until the Jews showed up. Then he refused to eat the food of the Gentiles and he separated from them. This then caused even Barnabas to do the same thing. Peter was fearful of what the Jews would say about violating the dietary laws of the Old Testament. Peter knew better that this and that is why Paul rebuked him.

**Acts 11:4-9**

*<sup>4</sup> But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them, saying,*

*<sup>5</sup> I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me:*

<sup>6</sup> Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

<sup>7</sup> And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat.

<sup>8</sup> But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth.

<sup>9</sup> But the voice answered me again from heaven, **What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.**

God was telling Peter that the dietary laws were no longer in effect.

**Days** - Many of the Jews also desired to hold on to certain days and they viewed them as holy days. Under the Law the Sabbath was holy and so many of those who were saved out of Judaism wanted to continue to keep the Sabbath but others who were saved saw everyday as being holy.

Both the **diet** and the **days** caused many problems in the early church.

#### **Notice Romans 14:1**

The weak person in this verse is the person who does not understand their liberty in Jesus Christ. This would be the person who wants to follow the dietary laws and keep the Sabbath. This would be the person who is legalistic. Because of how they were taught in the past they are convicted about letting go of these things. The strong person in this verse would be the individual who knows his liberty in Jesus Christ, and he knows he is no longer under the Law and therefore he can eat what he desires and each day to him is holy, not just one day.

Paul instructs the strong believer in this verse to receive the weak believer. This means to receive him into fellowship. The person who is weak is not to be treated like he is a second-class Christian. He is to be received but not to "doubtful disputations". This means he is not to be accepted so that he can be brought in with the intent of setting him straight. It is God's responsibility to open his eyes to his liberty in Jesus Christ. Our responsibility is to receive him as one of the family and be patient with him.

#### **Notice Romans 14:2**

Here was the tension between believers. The strong believer knows he is free from the entire Law. He knows he can eat all things.

#### **1 Timothy 4:4-5**

<sup>4</sup> For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving:

<sup>5</sup> For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

But the weak believer abstains from certain meats or even all meats. He may only eat vegetables and he believes that what he eats effects his spirituality.

### **Notice Romans 14:3**

Here is a warning for both believers. The strong believer is not to "despise" the weaker brother who will not eat certain meats. The weaker believer is not to "judge" the stronger brother who will eat all meats.

To "despise" a weaker believer would be to look down on them because they will not eat all meat. It would be to say, "What is wrong with you? Don't you know that in Christ you are free to eat all things?"

To "judge" the stronger believer would be to look at him in his liberty and criticize him for eating pork or whatever the meat would be. It would be to say, "You should not eat that! You are wrong in eating that meat!"

In our day we do not see these divisions as much over food, but this also applies to other areas. I have heard of churches that would not permit men to have beards, there were others who required certain hair cuts if you were to be accepted. I heard of a church where the pastor did not want anyone to own a van because that is what the hippies drove, and if you drove a van you were not accepted.

### **Notice Romans 14:3 again.**

God has received the weak and the strong and we are to do the same.

One of the main thoughts which we need to see here is, in the body of Jesus Christ there are going to be differences. When we get saved, we are not all poured into the same mold. We are certainly changed when we get saved but we are not changed into all the same person. There are churches who have their man-made rules and regulations, and they want to regiment and conform people into what they believe Christians should look and act like. That is known as "uniformity". Uniformity is not UNITY. We are free to be who we are in Christ. We do not need to all be the same.

### **Notice Romans 14:4**

Here Paul addresses the weak believer who judges the stronger believer who exercises his liberty in Christ. However, this also applies to any of us who chooses to sit back and judge

another believer. For anyone to judge another believer is to usurp the authority of God. Only God can judge a man for only God knows the heart and the motives of each individual. Each believer is a servant of the Lord, and we have no right to sit in judgment, as if we were his Master. It is before his own Master that each one stands approved or disapproved. One may look down on someone else with great criticism, convinced that he will make shipwreck of the faith because of his views on these matters. But such an attitude is wrong. God will sustain those on both sides of the question. He has the power to sustain His church.

Notice the words of J. Vernon McGee:

*"Paul asks, 'What right have you to judge another man's servant?' What right have you, Christian friend, to sit in judgment on another Christian's conduct when it involves something that is questionable? Are you God? Is that person accountable to you? Paul says, 'He is not accountable to you. He is accountable to God. He is going to stand before his own Master.'" Can you imagine being a dinner guest in someone's home, and the servant brings in cold biscuits. You say to the servant, 'What's the big idea of bringing me cold biscuits?' And you rebuke the servant! May I say to you, there would be an awkward silence in that home. That person is not your servant. Maybe she should not have served cold biscuits, but it is not your place to say so. I have a notion that the lady of the house will go back to the kitchen and will tend to the matter. Now maybe you disapprove of my conduct in one of these doubtful areas. I don't have to account to you; you are not my master. I am responsible to Jesus Christ. He is my Master."*

#### **Notice Romans 14:5**

Now Paul moves to the subject of days. As we briefly considered earlier there were believing Jews who still felt compelled to keep the Sabbath. They felt convicted about doing any work on the Sabbath. But there were also the strong believers who understood that in Christ everyday was holy for we walk with Him every day.

Now someone may raise the question, "What about the Lord's Day, which is the first day of the week?" Let me show you what the Believer's Commentary says concerning this question.

*"But what about the Lord's Day, the first day of the week? Does it not have a special place in the lives of Christians? We see in the NT that it was the day of our Lord's resurrection (Luke 24:1-9). On the next two Lord's days, Christ met with His disciples (John 20:19, 26). The Holy Spirit was given on the Day of Pentecost, which was on the first day of the week; Pentecost occurred seven Sundays after the Feast of Firstfruits (Lev. 23:15, 16; Acts 2:1), which symbolizes Christ's resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20, 23). The disciples gathered to break bread on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). Paul instructed the Corinthians to take a collection on the first day of the week. So, the Lord's Day does stand out in the NT*

*in a special way. But rather than being a day of obligation, like the Sabbath, it is a day of privilege. Released from our ordinary employment, we can set it apart in a special way for worshiping and serving our Lord.*

*Nowhere in the NT are Christians ever told to keep the Sabbath. And yet at the same time we recognize the principle of one day in seven, one day of rest after six days of work."*

**Notice Romans 14:5 again.**

Paul tells his readers that every man is to be "**fully persuaded in his mind**". This means, "Let every man see to it that he is really doing what he does for the Lord's sake, and not merely on the basis of some prejudice or whim." Some standards and practices in our local churches are traditional but not necessarily scriptural.

**Conclusion:**

Let us understand that none of this applies to doctrinal matters. The differences which Paul is addressing here was not something which the people believed was a requirement for salvation. That would have been preaching "another gospel". Remember the situation in Galatians? The Judaizers had come in and began to teach that circumcision was required for salvation. Paul did not tell the Galatians to accept the people who were teaching that false doctrine.

**Galatians 1:6-9**

<sup>6</sup> *I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:*

<sup>7</sup> *Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.*

<sup>8</sup> *But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.*

<sup>9</sup> *As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.*

In Romans 14 Paul is dealing with personal convictions which apply to living the Christian life, not that which is required for entering the Christian life.