

Conviction before Preference # 46

Romans 14: 1-12

As we continue our study of Romans, Paul continues to address the life believers are to live following conversion. As we examine our text today, we must bear in mind the diversity of the church in Rome. The church there was made up of Jews and Gentiles. Having such a diverse makeup, it was inevitable that personal preferences would surface, and at times, create division among the brethren. Many of the Jews continued to follow the teachings of the Mosaic Law in regard to daily practices and diet. Many of the Gentiles had been delivered from a pagan system of worship, where sacrifices were often offered to strange gods and then eaten by the worshipers. For this reason, some of them chose to refrain from meat altogether. Such differences created debate and contention within the church, with some evidently seeking to support their argument with biblical references.

Paul seeks to put this issue to rest, while encouraging every believer to examine their own lives and live victoriously for the Lord. He knew some matters were clearly addressed in Scripture and others were simply matters of opinion with no clear instruction from Scripture.

The basis for contention has changed in the modern church, but the principles behind these arguments remain alive and well. Today some enjoy great liberty in Christ and live accordingly. Others seem to struggle with their relationship, constantly feeling dirty or defeated. Often those who enjoy liberty are labeled as being liberal, while those who struggle are labeled as being legalistic due to their strong desire to overcome spiritual defeat. The key is finding a proper balance. We need to enjoy liberty in Christ, living victoriously for Him, but we must not use our liberty as an occasion to sin. We also need to seek purity in life before the Lord, but we must not develop a condemning spirit toward others. On matters of conviction, we must stand firm, but on matters of preference, we must exercise restraint and understanding. Let's examine the [considerations](#) within the text as we think on: [Conviction before Preference](#).

I. A Warning against Condemnation (1-4) – Paul offers a warning against a condemning spirit regarding matters of preference. We discover that:

A. We must Favor Reception (1) – [Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations](#). Knowing the church was made up of all levels of believers, some mature in faith and others just babes in Christ, Paul urged them to receive those who were weak in the faith. They must not shun the weak or seek to create doubt in their minds or among others. These are to be received as believers in Christ and encouraged in the faith.

- The same is true in our lives. We don't all worship the Lord in the same way. We don't approach our quiet, devotional time the same. We enjoy different types of music, and we may not always agree on every theological point, but that doesn't mean that we have to reject one another! We can't expect a new believer to grasp the depths of truth an older believer has learned over the years. We need to show unity in matters of conviction and humility in matters of preference.

B. We must Practice Restraint (2) – *For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.* Paul uses dietary preferences as an example. Some had liberty to eat anything they wanted, including all manner of meat, while others chose to only eat a vegetarian diet. This was certainly not an issue worthy of division. While others approached preferential choices differently, this was no reason to shun them or question their faith. This truth can be applied to a multitude of preferences that have no biblical mandate and do not matter in a spiritual sense. In matters of personal preference, where there is no clear biblical instruction, we must be willing to practice restraint.

C. We must Show Respect (3-4) – *Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.* ^[4] *Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.* Paul warns against passing judgment regarding matters of preference. We are expected to show respect toward others who have different preferences. It is not our responsibility to ensure that everyone adopts and embraces our particular preferences.

- Let me be clear: Paul is in no way advocating abandoning biblical doctrine or convictions. He is speaking solely regarding matters of preference. He reveals we have no authority to judge or condemn in these areas. We all have different approaches, and as long as they do not contradict Scripture, we must show respect for those who differ from us. If God has received them and isn't convicting them for a particular practice, we have no reason to behave otherwise.

II. A Word about Observation (5-9) – Here Paul discusses differing observations and approaches in the lives of individuals. He speaks:

A. Regarding Conviction (5) – *One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.* Many Jews continued to observe all the holy days and occasions mandated in the Law. Others no longer saw the need, having received salvation in Christ. Some were convicted to continue these practices while others felt liberty in

abandoning certain observances. Paul revealed it was a matter of personal conviction and should never become a matter of condemnation or contention.

- The focus here is personal conviction regarding particular observances. If you feel convicted about a particular practice on a certain day, you should avoid that. Others may not share that conviction and feel perfectly acceptable before the Lord in their practices. We must follow the Lord's direction for our lives, but practice respect and restraint for others, as long as their practices don't violate Scripture.

B. Regarding Sanctification (6) – He that regardeth the day, regardeth *it* unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard *it*. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. Paul now speaks of personal growth and conformity to Christ. This refers to matters of conviction and conscience. Some regarded each day as a day the Lord had made and worthy of special honor. Others held that reservation primarily for the Lord's Day. Some ate meat and gave God thanks, while others refrained from eating meat and also gave thanks. Each had a different approach, but each matured in their faith and sought to honor the Lord.

- Simply, we need to examine our daily activities and ask: does this honor the Lord in my life? If you can observe that particular practice without conviction from the Spirit, then you are at liberty. As long as we seek to honor the Lord in all we do, we will continue to grow in our faith.

C. Regarding Devotion (7) – For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. Paul reminds us that we are not our own. We do not live solely by ourselves, for ourselves; nor do we die by ourselves, and to ourselves. We have been bought with a price and each day we live is a day the Lord has blessed us with. We are expected to devote our lives, every day, unto the Lord in order to honor and serve Him!

- We must also consider the fact that we do not live isolated lives. Our lives influence the lives of others. We must live our lives according to God's desire for us, but we must also be conscious of others around us. Later we will deal with the issue of becoming a stumbling-block before others. We must live devoted to Christ and His cause. This will require restraint at times in order to be an effective witness.

D. Regarding Submission (8-9) – For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. ^[9] For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. Being devoted to the Lord is

great, but we must be willing to take it a step further. We must be committed to living our lives totally surrendered and submitted to the will of God. Whatever we do or accomplish in this life, we continue to belong to the Lord. We must seek to be an effective witness and positive influence, but our primary concern is submission to the Lord. As long as we live totally submitted to Christ, we will honor Him and He will take care of the issues that arise, whatever they may be. We are His in life, and we are His in death!

III. A Witness to Examination (10-12) – In closing Paul speaks of the examination all will face before the Lord when this life is over. Consider:

A. The Warning Expressed (10) – *But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at naught thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.* Some had been judgmental and condemning of others for certain practices, but Paul offers a reminder that every believer will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ. As we condemn others regarding personal preferences, we need to bear in mind that the Lord will have the final say in judgment. He is the one we will give account to, not those around us.

B. The Word Expounded (11) – *For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.* We know that every knee will bow and confess Jesus as Lord to the glory of God the Father, but I believe this deals with the believer in judgment. We will already have bowed and confessed Christ in salvation. This deals with the measure of humility that will be present as we stand before our Judge. The actions of others, and even our perceived righteousness will not matter on that day. We will humbly bow and agree with the word of our Judge. There will be no accusation or argument, just agreement!

C. The Witness Explained (12) – *So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.* Paul urges the believer to live a life that honors God at all times, regardless of what others do or say. We will not be called to give account for them, nor them for us; but we all will give account of ourselves before the Lord. He will examine the deeds we have done in this body and we will be judged accordingly. This will not determine acceptance into heaven, but rewards received or denied. We must do all we can to honor the Lord and live for Him. This includes seeking to be a help rather than a burden to fellow believers. I don't want to stand before the Lord responsible for the failure or lack of growth among others.

Conclusion: This has been a challenging and even confrontational text. Paul boldly confronted the judgmental attitudes prevalent among the body of Christ. He is not advocating loose or unbiblical behavior, but respect and restraint in matters of preference.

Each of us will give account of our lives unto the Lord. That is a humbling and sobering thought. If there are areas that need to be addressed, now is the time to bring them before the Lord and deal with them. If you are unsaved and die in that condition, you will face Christ in judgment, but it will be at the Great White Throne. This will be a judgment of works as well, but it will end in condemnation and eternal separation in hell. Come to Christ and receive salvation while He is pleading with you!