

October 24, 2021 - David Baumgartner

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Preacher: David Baumgartner

[0 : 00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church, knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. All right. Boy, it is good to be here, isn't it? God is good. And all the time. Amen.

This morning we're going to be continuing our study in the book of Romans. If you have your Bibles, please turn with me to Romans chapter 14. This morning we're going to be looking at a favorite pastime of churches.

Yeah, good laugh there. Bible teacher Ray Stedman, he calls it an indoor sporting event for churches. What am I talking about? I'm talking about when we disagree with one another.

Speaking about his own church, Ray Stedman said that we know God is completely happy with us just the way we are. But there's other Christians who don't seem to measure up.

Well, who are they? Let me describe them. He says, you know them. They drink beer. They play cards. They go to movies. They smoke cigars. They work on Sundays. They wear lipstick. They dance.

[1 : 17] They play musical instruments. They use zippers instead of buttons. Do you agree with him? Yeah, I've often wondered, how can you have fellowship with somebody who uses zippers instead of buttons?

Well, his point here is that if you look around, and maybe you can do that today. Just look around. What you will see is there's a tremendous amount of diversity.

Even in a small group like ours. You know, we have different ages chronologically. Different ages spiritually. Different personalities. Different backgrounds.

And all of these differences can be great opportunities for disagreement. There was this guy that I came across here. He actually did a brief study about disagreement in churches.

He's got 25 different things that churches argue about. But I'm only going to read 10. Listen to some of these things. Church argument over the vote to decide if there should be a clock in the worship hall.

[2 : 25] People argue about that. How about this? This is a 45-minute heated argument about this type of filing cabinet to purchase. Is it black or brown? Two, three, or four drawers.

How about this one? A fight over which picture of Jesus to put in the foyer. That's kind of interesting. There was a petition to have all of the church staff clean-shaven.

There's an argument about that. How about this one? There was a dispute in the church because the Lord's Supper one Sunday had cran grape juice instead of grape juice.

That's interesting here. Just a couple more. An argument about whether the church should serve deviled eggs at a potluck. I think there's something wrong there with that word deviled eggs.

How about the issue of potluck? Yeah, that was an argument. Maybe it should be pot blessing. They argued about that. Two more. Pot what?

[3 : 30] Pot providence. Oh. Some church members left because one church member hid the vacuum cleaner. Here's the last one.

An argument over whether the fake dusty plants that are up on stage here ought to be removed. No such thing as a perfect church.

Well said, Brother Kevin. No such thing as a perfect church. But when you think about all these differences, how do we deal with this? And boy, I tell you what.

God is good. You think about our discussion during Sunday school about, you know, these disagreements that we can have in churches. And the Lord comes to our rescue.

Amen. He does. In our passage this morning, Paul is going to deal with how do you maintain unity in the church. I think it's really important that how we see how Paul develops this topic here.

[4 : 32] How he introduces it. If you look in chapter 13, verse 8, he says, Oh, nothing to anyone except to love one another. For he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.

Earlier in Romans, in chapter 12, verses 9, he says, Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Give preference to one another in honor. Be of the same mind, he says later on. In verse 16, be of the same mind toward one another.

If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. So we see here, this topic that we're going to look at this morning is fairly extensive.

It actually runs all the way through chapter 14 and the first 14 verses of the next chapter. So this morning is just going to be an introduction to it. And we'll be exploring this much more.

[5 : 30] But let's go ahead and go to the Lord in prayer. Our Heavenly Father, it is so good to be in your presence this morning. We're here to worship you, to sing songs about you, but mostly, Lord, to focus on who you are and how your great love has been manifested to us through Jesus Christ.

And, Lord, just not only that, but how we could change and how you would help us to do that so that we may be pleasing to you and to be useful for your ministry and your glory.

Lord, we're so thankful for your holy word, your word that is so timely and it comes to our rescue, comes to our aid. Because as fallen creatures, Lord, who have been redeemed, we're still in our infancy, Lord.

But yet, Lord, you'll help us. And through the power and ministry of your spirit, that we can glorify you in all that we do. May we be pleasing to you, Lord, as we fellowship and love one another well.

Thank you for this. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Let's look at our text here, beginning in verse 1, chapter 14. He says this, As to the one who is weak in faith, he says, Welcome him, but not to quarrel over his opinions.

[6 : 53] I chose the ESV version of that verse because it's just so clear the way they say it. And I think that we ought to begin our study here by asking this question, What does it mean to be weak in faith?

Actually, the Greek text, it reads, Weak in the faith. And for some reason, most English translations leave out the article, And I think it's because they don't want readers to think that Paul's referring to saving faith.

In other words, as if someone could be saved just a little bit. No, that wouldn't be true. Paul's not describing saving faith here. Rather, someone who is weak in the faith is a believer who is having trouble, fully embracing all the liberties and all the freedoms that Jesus Christ has secured for us.

And the tense of the verb actually suggests a person who is weak at a given moment or in a particular circumstance.

So we might ask the question, Well, what kind of circumstance might Paul be dealing with here? What might be going on in the Church of Rome? When we first began this study, you may recall that the believers in Rome were composed of both Jews and Greeks.

[8 : 25] And so they had different backgrounds. And so the church in Rome began, and as time went on, of course, more and more people placed their faith in Jesus Christ.

And they became what? New creations in Christ. As Paul said in his second letter to the Corinthians, Old things have passed away. All things have become new.

It's the same with us, isn't it? We're free in Christ, not only from sin, not only from death, not only from hell, but also all the religious rituals that are out there.

The sacrifices, holy days, ceremonies. But what he's dealing with here is that there were some who were both Jews and Greeks who couldn't quite let go of their past.

For instance, let's start with the Jews. All their lives, consider this with me, they were ingrained with the Mosaic law. And these rules and laws, they touched every area of their life.

[9 : 35] What you ate, how you cooked what you ate, what you wore, the holy days, new moons, Sabbaths. And for them, things had to be kosher.

You may have heard that word before many times. That comes from a Hebrew word, kasher, which means fit, proper, acceptable. And so for these Jews, it was hard to let go what seemed so proper in their lives.

Well, what about the Greeks, the Gentiles? Well, similarly, there were Gentile believers who were saved right out of the Greco-Roman culture. And we have to remember, that's a culture that's steeped in paganism and idolatry.

And no doubt, many of these believers in Rome had themselves participated in these pagan festivals where you're worshiping idols by eating meat offered to them.

And of course now, as believers, some of them would have difficulties with eating meat. And that's because it would remind them of certain memories that they had, maybe things they participated in.

[10 : 44] And so with that, Paul here gives a series of imperatives in this text here. These are commands that are written to believers, just like us.

And notice he begins here in verse 1. He's speaking to those who are like himself, who we would say strong in the faith. And he says, accept weaker believers, but not so that you can debate with him over his opinions.

Isn't that amazing? You might want to ask, what does he mean by opinions? Those are conclusions that have been reached through reason. That's why the NIV has, they say, disputable matters.

Boy, I tell you what, many of us love the debate, don't we? Yeah, we sure do. Go into a fellowship hall sometimes and you'll hear it. I mean, when you meet another believer, the first thing you want to do is straighten the guy out, right?

We, according to Paul, we should resist that, brothers and sisters. It's important to know here that Paul's not talking about sin. You guys get that?

[11 : 57] He's not talking about sin. And there are many topics in scripture that speaks about things that are not debatable. For example, it's always wrong to be drunk.

It's always wrong to commit adultery, to engage in premarital sex. God has spoken about these things. And we as believers, we need to exhort one another when God's word is not being followed.

And if necessary, we need to even discipline one another according to how it's been laid out in the Bible. In those cases, we're not judging others. No, the word of God has judged that situation.

And so, it's already been pronounced as wrong. But his point here in our text is that there are other areas that are left open where God leaves it up to the individual believer to practice what he or she thinks is right based upon their own conviction as how the Spirit's leading them.

It's a matter of one's faith. For example, look with me, verse 2. He says, One man has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only.

[13 : 18] Now, Paul has nothing against vegetarians or vegans or anything like that. No, but he is establishing a contrast here. Notice in your Bible here, notice that those who eat all things, they're exhibiting faith.

Do you notice that? But there's no mention of faith for those who are what he calls weak. But regardless, notice verse 3. He says, Let not him who eats, okay, so that's the strong believer, regard with contempt the weaker believer.

That is, him who does not eat. In other words, the strong believer may be tempted to look down upon his weaker brother or sister as being perhaps legalistic, faithless, if you will, you know, getting in the way of things that can be enjoyed properly.

No, Paul says, don't do that. Don't judge one another in that way. And notice he goes on in verse 3. He says, And let not him who does not eat, okay, this is the weaker brother, judge him who eats.

That's the strong brother. And so, similarly here, the weaker brother may be tempted to condemn the stronger brother for what he sees as maybe an abuse of liberty.

[14 : 42] Good Christians shouldn't be doing such a thing. And maybe you've experienced some of that before. Well, these urges, they need to be resisted as well.

Why? We look in verse 3. He goes on, For God has accepted him. In this case, referring to the stronger brother here. Sometimes, people have the idea that Christians who follow strict rules, that they're the most mature ones around.

You agree with that? It's not always true. It may seem that way, but it's not always true. In fact, a person can become legalistic.

Someone's defined a legalist as a person who lives in utter terror at the thought that somewhere, someone might be having a good time. Here's their motto.

We don't drink, smoke, or chew, or run around with girls who do. I think here's a better motto or saying. It's regarding doctrine that we must major in the majors and minor in the minors.

[15 : 56] Have you ever heard that before? Yeah, it's a good thing to say. It's true. There are times, even, when church groups can become known, can become more known for what they're against than what they're for.

Have you ever experienced that? Yeah. Yeah. I think this is especially true when those who major in the minors become the majority of a certain church or of a given church.

And this is a problem, friends. And that's because it can distort how other people, and I'm talking about the world, how other people view Christianity, how they see Christianity.

What's it about? It propagates a notion that Christianity is just a bunch of rules, just a bunch of regulation, regulations. Anything fun is taboo.

It's forbidden. And so naturally, people will stay away from churches like that, right? In fact, they'll stay away from all the churches because they think all churches are legalistic.

[17 : 00] And so what does a church do? Well, I'll tell you something. About 20 years ago, churches began changing their names by removing the word church from their name.

And all, did you notice this? All these churches, all these groups began springing up. Catchy names, but these churches didn't want to be known as church, as a church.

This December will be Bethel Community Church's 30th birthday. Yeah. Just think, we could have started out as the Bethel.

By the way, does anybody remember our founding verse? Kurt, what was it? Yeah. Philippians 2, 3, and 4.

Preferring one another over ourselves. Boy, that fits our text, doesn't it? Prefer one another over yourself. And so Paul here, he's writing to believers, and he says, accept one another.

[18 : 06] And so, in the remainder of this passage, Paul is going to establish four great truths of why we should do that. The scripture comes to our rescue this morning from our Sunday school.

Here's four reasons. I'm going to go through these kind of quickly here. First of all, God is able to deal with each one of his children. Do you believe that?

He is. Criticism is not a spiritual gift. No. God is able to deal with each children. And Paul really gets personal here.

Look with me in verse 4. Notice what he says. Who are you to judge the servant of another? By the way, that you is singular. It's kind of like Paul is saying, you know who you are.

Who are you to judge another's servant? This is not the usual word for servant, which in the Greek is *doulos*. Rather, this is referring to a domestic or a personal servant.

[19 : 11] And so I think the main point here is that this is referring to someone who has a master. And so the point is, you're not that person. You're not that master.

Verse 4, he continues, to his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand for the Lord is able to make him stand.

I think the Greek word for that is mind your own business. That's what it is. It's similar to parenting. Let me ask you something. Do you correct your neighbor's children?

No, you better not. You might get a black eye or something. But you do correct your own children, don't you? There's a lot. So you correct your own. God knows his own.

He knows his servants. And he's powerful enough to make them stand or to fall if needed. And he's there. What a blessing it is.

[20 : 12] Secondly, God sees what we cannot see in others. You believe that? Yeah. Notice verse 5.

One man regards one day above another. Another regards every day alike. He who observes the day observes it for the Lord and he who eats does so for the Lord.

For he gives thanks to God and he who eats not for the Lord he does not eat and gives thanks to God. I think the issue here is motive.

Notice both persons the weak and the strong brother do what they do as we could say an act of worship. It's for the Lord and it's giving thanks to God.

But here's the truth friends. We cannot see each other's motives but God does. That's the point. This is why Paul says in verse 5 he says let each man be fully convinced in his own mind.

[21 : 19] And so instead of being offended you and I can give each other the benefit of the doubt because what they may be doing is they're doing it to please God.

So God is able to deal with his children secondly God sees what we cannot see third and I know you'll agree with this Jesus Christ is Lord.

Amen. He says verse 7 notice for not one of us lives for himself and not one dies for himself for if we live we live for the Lord or if we die we die for the Lord whether we live or die we are the Lord's I just want to ask you here does anybody here need to be convinced that we belong to the Lord?

No no hands and those of you who are watching on the internet I hope you didn't raise your hand there are several passages so many that talk about how God has purchased believers by his blood what a great act of love that was isn't it?

Boy Jesus Christ God himself came into this world as a little baby boy we're going to be celebrating that pretty soon aren't we? the changes of seasons and so on just makes you remember how precious that truth is that God came into this world and he lived he grew up he lived a life a perfect life he went around and taught people he did miracles but the greatest thing he did is that he went to a cross and he died and he died not because of anything wrong he did but because of our wrongs our sins what a great thing that is and so and then he says in verse 9 for to this end Christ died and he lived again that he might be both Lord of the dead and the living praise God Jesus rose from the dead and the last thing he said before he died was it's finished what great truths that we place our faith in

[23 : 38] Christ that we our sins are forgiven we're new people Jesus lived he died and he's alive again and consequently he is Lord he is Lord of all he's Lord of all who've died he's Lord of all who are alive still I think that just about covers everybody doesn't it it does and one day there will be a day when all believers will be together you're familiar with that passage in Revelation chapter 7 where all these people are together worshiping God every kindred tongue nation what a great thing that will be amen verse 10 he says but you here he is getting personal again why do you judge your brother or you again the other guy why do you regard your brother with contempt

I think Paul here he begs the question why are you doing this brothers sisters I think it makes me ashamed of the times that I've gotten involved in petty arguments criticisms of fellow believers in whom God is their Lord I'm not maybe you can relate to that as well Jesus is Lord Lord and lastly Jesus is the judge look with me verse 10 he says for it is written I'm sorry verse 11 for it is written as I live says the Lord every knee shall bow to me and every tongue shall give praise to God now verse 11 here that's a quote from Isaiah 45 verse 23 if you have a new American standard it may say give praise to God I think a better translation might be every tongue will acknowledge

God both his sovereignty and in his righteousness here's the main point all of us will stand as he says we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God all of us notice Paul includes himself here so verse 12 he says so then each of us shall give an account of himself those of you who are studying the book of Hebrews you've no doubt come across this in Hebrews 9 just as it is appointed for man to die once after this comes what the judgment that's right you might want to ask well how so how will all people be judged well here's what the Bible tells us the full counsel of God tells us that unbelievers will be judged at what's called the great white throne judgment those who have rejected the gospel will be thrown into the lake of fire and that's because they must pay for all of their sins they have no sin bearer and they will do that forever but for the believer

Jesus has already taken our punishment upon himself and we don't have to fear the great white throne judgment we will undergo a different judgment and this judgment is called the judgment seat of Christ and this judgment is to evaluate the works that we do down here on earth and it will determine I believe our ministries in eternity our ministries in the future Paul says in his first letter to the Corinthians in chapter three each man's work will become evident for the day will show it because it will be revealed with fire and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work if any man's work which he has built upon it remains he shall receive a reward if any man's work is burned up he shall suffer loss but he himself shall be saved yet so as through fire that may seem like a very threatening thing and it is going to be tough for some we pray and we seek the Lord we ask for his forgiveness and we seek to dedicate our lives to him but we don't have to fear that great white throne judgment because of

Jesus and how wonderful he is here's the four reasons why we should accept one another God is able to deal with each one of his he sees what we cannot see in others thirdly Jesus is Lord fourth Jesus Christ is the judge this is just an introduction friends I'm reminded of this passage in Psalm 133 behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell how together in unity unity it is good it's pleasing to God God loves unity he does but he doesn't expect uniformity and that would be how we would all think exactly alike even the most healthy churches will not agree on disputable matters but our differences of opinion they need not cause division sometimes it happens

[29 : 30] Warren Wiersbe tells this story about two famous Christians that no doubt you've heard about they've lived during the Victorian era of England Charles Spurgeon and Joseph Parker have you heard of those names both of them were great preachers of the gospel early in their ministries they had a great deal of mutual respect for one another they'd fellowship together I guess if there was a Starbucks they'd probably find them both in there having a good cup of coffee over God's word they even shared each other's pulpits at their churches well guess what yeah they had a disagreement Spurgeon accused Parker of being unspiritual why because Parker attended a theater he went to it wasn't a movie but it was a he went to a theater now here's what's interesting is that

Spurgeon smoked cigars and that's a practice that many believers would also condemn they both should have remembered this passage and I'm sure they spoke about they should have remembered to accept one another instead of these petty things because sometimes our liberties can cause other believers to stumble and we'll be looking at that next week of course but remember this the take home God loves unity amen listen to this verse in Ephesians chapter 4 being diligent to preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace there is one body and one spirit just also you are called in one hope of your calling how about to the church in Colossae he says and beyond all of these things put on love which is the perfect bond of unity yeah

I had to ask the musicians to come up occasionally thank you brother occasionally I'm asked why are there so many different churches out there have you ever been asked that yeah I personally believe there's only one church and that's the church of Jesus Christ but there are many different expressions of it not only geographically I'm talking about in response to accommodate all of these personal preferences that are out there regarding these disputable matters over the years visitors have come to Bethel and they're usually expecting something and so they'll come and they'll say boy music was really different or they'll say you know I enjoyed this or that and so where are the statues where are the pictures where's the picture of

Jesus where are the candles why why why where is it here's the best answer and we'll close with this in the essentials let there be unity in the non essentials let there be liberty in everything let there be love amen you consider this I think that the world that we live in right now is the most divided that it has ever been I really do believe that what a great way to show the world how different we are because of Jesus Christ what a difference God has made in our lives heavenly father we are so grateful for who you are for all the things that you have done for us and Lord just by virtue of us still being here you're not done with us we're still being changed into the image of Jesus Christ who was loving who was kind hearted he didn't have any harsh words to say except to perhaps the religious leaders who hated him how wonderful it must have been to walk with

Jesus but Lord through your word and through your spirit we can say that he's our brother he's our savior our friend and we can still place our faith in him and all the work that he's going to do with us Lord we thank you Lord and thank you that you're not through with us we're grateful for the forgiveness of sin that we find because Lord we're so prone to blow it we're so prone to judge one another over stupid things Lord until that great day that you call us home or that wonderful day that you come for us in the clouds we pray Father that we would live to please you and we thank you in Jesus name we pray I we thank you to a may au and you

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