

Untitled (55)

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Date: 13 September 2020

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[0:00] Do I just push this? Okay. Well, Lord bless and guide us as we crack open your word. Keep us close to you, O Lord.

! We pray this, Father, in the name of Jesus, our Lord. Amen. Please be seated. Okay, so... Enter PIN.

Hit notes. There it is. So, the lady worked behind the counter, dishing out ice cream. And the little boy came up and she looked at him and she was immediately turned off. He was dirty, his clothes were bedraggled, she didn't like him.

And to make matters worse, he says, how much is a hot fudge sundae? And she said, look at the board, \$2.50. And he counted his money slowly.

[1:03] And he said, well, how much is one scoop of ice cream in a cup? She says, look at the board, \$2.25. Now, which is it?

He counted his money of some more. And he said, I think I'll just have the single scoop of vanilla ice cream. So, she said, put the money down first.

So, he counted out the quarters, \$2.25. She threw the scoop in a cup, not one bit more than a scoop, and handed it to him.

And he said, thank you, ma'am. And he sat down. She waited on other customers. She noticed out of the corner of his eye that he finished his ice cream and said, thank you.

And smiled and walked out. He didn't have a mask in those days. And speaking of masks, I don't have to have a mask when I speak. Okay. So, she went to clean up the table.

[2:06] And then she noticed it. A quarter. He got the single scoop of ice cream when he could have gotten the sundae.

Because he wanted to leave her a tip. She was embarrassed. She felt ashamed. And she had judged the color of his skin rather than the character of his heart.

To copy a speaker from many years ago. How often do we get stuck into that? Judging people in the wrong way.

This is what the epistle is about today. I noticed, sitting in the pew, that Caleb has been going through the Romans, the epistle lesson, each Sunday.

And so, I thought I would do the same thing. But, Caleb. Yikes. Preaching on this passage is like suicide.

[3:14] I can't win. So, I'm going to let the Lord win. Romans 14. If I were still back in the Roman Catholic Church, I would title this sermon, Can We Have Fewer Holy Days of Obligation and More Meatballs on Friday?

That's what the title would be. Okay. And before I preach on this particular passage, it's Romans 14, 5-12.

You can look it up in your pew Bible because we'll be referring to it. Before I do that, I need to make a disclaimer. This passage was not meant by Paul to show us how to gain salvation.

Get it? In the book of Romans, the letter to the Romans, he does both. He shows people how to gain salvation. And then he shows people how to live as Christians.

To gain salvation, we have what we have called the Roman road. The Roman road which leads to salvation, right?

[4:20] And there are key verses. Romans 3-23. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. That includes each one of us. Then Romans 5-8.

But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Then Romans 6-23. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord.

And then the cap is Romans 10-9-10. Now, Jack, would you flip back a couple of pages and read us Romans 10-9-10. See, there's the key verse.

And I pray that each one of you has joined me in proclaiming Jesus as my Lord and believing that God raised him from the dead.

That's what salvation is based on. God's act for us. God inviting us in. It's not a bunch of steps we've got to take in behavior to get there.

[5:44] We're there by inviting Jesus Christ into our life. So now we're ready to move into the passage for today. Paul was writing to Christian believers on how to live.

So let's look at that passage. We're going to start with verses 5 and 6. If you would turn to the pew Bible, I'm going to have you read it with me. Verses 5 and 6 of chapter 14.

Ready? Here we go. One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.

The one who observes the day observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God.

While the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. Now, isn't that clear?

[6:53] I'm glad the Holy Spirit put this together, or I would seriously question Paul's mind. Okay. Now, I have to remember that when Paul wrote this, there was a great dilemma among Christian believers.

The dilemma was, do I follow the Jewish Old Testament laws or not? Big question.

The church spent years debating that. Paul is laying it out for his people. You know, there were like 600 and some laws that Jews had to follow.

And some of those were ceremonial laws, right? Some were civil laws. Some were dietary laws.

I mean, you had to really have all this stuff cataloged in your mind, or you were going to violate the law. Jesus, interestingly enough, broke some of these laws on purpose to make a point.

[8:04] He was making the point that these were man-made laws, not God-made laws. For instance, with the Sabbath. All right?

Everybody knew you go to synagogue on the Sabbath. But the Jewish leaders, and they're like all religious leaders who have the same thing today, decided they wanted to save that commandment from anybody breaking it.

So the deal was, go to synagogue and don't work. So they built these laws. You could walk on the Sabbath someplace, but you could only go what was called a Sabbath day's journey.

Because if you took one more step than you were supposed to, it was considered work, and you were in violation. And all kinds of rules had grown up to, quote, protect the law.

Well, the early church leaders looked at this and looked at what Jesus taught, and they realized that Jesus was proclaiming freedom from encumbrance from man-made laws.

[9:12] And so they decided that for the Christian church, we didn't need to follow the dietary laws. We didn't need to follow the ceremonial laws.

We didn't need to follow the civil laws. We needed to follow the moral law, which we call the Ten Commandments, the commandment to love. That's the way it's been ever since, but we've been fighting about it ever since.

Because we fight. Now, I go back to my childhood. Alright, now these were good people, but they were encumbered with rules that did not make a lot of sense.

One, eating meat on a Friday. If you ate meat on Friday and you didn't get to confession, you were going to hell if you died. I don't know about that.

But I do know that the church changed that rule. And so, in the Anglican church, we're not so much on warning people that they're going to go to hell, but we do have rules we try to live by.

[10:20] For us, we say, during Lent, don't eat meat on Friday, but it's up to you. You get the difference? Alright. Ah, to say nothing of missing Mass on Sunday when I was a kid.

My mother and father had a rule. If you're dead, you don't have to go to church today. That was the rule. Because we knew if you missed church on Sunday, and you didn't get to confession, if you died, you were going to hell.

That's the way it was. So, we continue to make these rules to protect the rules. And even today, a wonderful group of people called Messianic Jews.

Have you met a Messianic Jew? They maintain the Jewish customs and rules, but they recognize Jesus as the Messiah. Messianic Jews. And in a former parish, one of the guys in the parish had a wife who was a Messianic Jew.

And he was really torn. Which way do I go? Because his wife said, you're not fully living for Jesus unless you follow all these rules. And he was saying, can I live for Jesus and not follow all these holy days?

[11:40] And I don't know if he ever put it together in his mind. I tried to talk about the freedom that Jesus offers us. I'm not sure it ever really got there.

Okay, so, we look at those two verses, five and six, and we realize that Paul is saying that whether you follow civil, ceremonial, liturgical rules or not, you are simply to live for the Lord.

In other words, Paul wasn't saying you can't follow these things. He's just saying it's not necessary to follow these things. The point is, you are the Lord's. Live for the Lord.

That's a great, that's a great thing that Paul has given us in the power of the Holy Spirit. He'll talk later about judging each other because we believe the others don't do it right. Well, he'll get to that. But what he's saying now is, do it to the Lord. Think it through, pray through. Which brings us to point two. Alright, we did point one. Check it off. Point two.

[12:55] Verses seven through nine. And if we could read that together, that would be great. Ready? Let's go. For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself.

For if we live, we live to the Lord. And if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live, or whether we die, we are the Lord's.

For to this end, Christ died, and lived again, that he might be Lord, both of the living, and the dead. Now that's pretty heavy.

Those are magnificent verses. Because it puts in perspective who we are in Christ. You see, understanding that we have been saved, we are being saved, and we will be saved, puts life on this earth in great perspective.

Our attitude toward how we honor Jesus Christ is what makes the difference. Not checking off rules. That's an important thing for us to have.

[14:03] It actually prevents us from the accusation that we are holier-than-thou people. Okay? Eeks! I hate that holier-than-thou thing.

The bottom line is, we are the Lord's. Do we look like it? Okay? At the Marine Corps base in Hawaii, as you walk out the barracks, there's a big mirror.

And above the mirror, it says, you are a Marine. Do you look like it? That applies to us. We are Christians.

Do we look like it? Which brings us to the final three verses, verses 10 through 12. So why don't we read that together? Why do you pass judgment on your brother?

Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is risen, as I live, said the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue will confess to God.

[15:10] So then each of us will give an account of himself to God. Paul is coming against what you call casuistry. Casuistry is sort of lining up everything that needs to be done or should not be done, and then finding, if I stub my toe, what are the actions I need to take?

What are the things I need to say or not to say? Kind of a casuistry thing. He's lining up against that kind of life and especially browbeating others because they, quote, don't do it right.

Finding fault with others. There's an actor, you probably know Tom Hanks and his wife Rita. They defeated the coronavirus and they were interviewed about that.

And what Tom Hanks said, well, you know, it really just goes back to our faith. Now I'm paraphrasing what he said. He said, I grew up in a kind of a nominal home. Rita grew up in the Greek Orthodox Church and we were beating on each other about what was right and finally we prayed about it and I became a Greek Orthodox.

And so for the last, I've been married a lot of years, they've been active members of their Greek Orthodox Church in Los Angeles. Instead of fighting or playing holier than thou, they came together under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

[16:40] Can we do that? Can we bury the hatchet and forget where we put it? I don't know if you ever try to dig up those hatchets again.

And there are so many things today where we can browbeat one another. Let me give you some examples. Sex outside marriage. Now, a lot of us are not so much concerned about that anymore, but a lot of people are concerned about that.

Sex outside of marriage. Hmm. Well, we know what the Scripture says.

We know what the Church says. Sex outside marriage is called fornication. It's not to be an accepted way of life.

But am I going to browbeat you because you can't live according to that rule? Am I going to hide in your closet and jump up and say, Ha ha!

[17:48] You know, I have my own sins to worry about. But if you ask me, I'll let you know. Alright, here's another one. Same-sex marriage.

None of us are dealing with that, are we? No. Just like every day. Alright. Does the Scripture condemn that? Well, in fact, in the beginning, He made them male and female and a man will leave father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two become one flesh.

The Church has advocated opposite-sex marriage. Now, am I going to browbeat you because you don't see it that way? No, I'm going to point out what the Scriptures say.

It's between you and God. God, I can't deal with your sins. Here's one that's even a little closer to home. Attending church each Sunday.

Who said we have to do that? In the Anglican Church, you don't go to hell if you miss church on Sunday. But in fact, the Scriptures really move us toward that every Sunday joy, not obligation, of coming together with the body of Christ.

[19:01] Now, am I going to browbeat you because you're sloppy about coming to church on Sunday? Why should I do that? I've got my own stuff I've got to deal with. You've got to deal with that.

I can tell you what the Scriptures say. You've just got to figure out what you're going to do with it. And then, one more. Wearing a mask at church on Sunday.

Caleb, is it okay if I probe here? Is that a sin? If I wear a mask on Sunday, is that a sin?

If I don't wear a mask on Sunday, is that a sin? Is it a gray area? You know, it's interesting because the Surgeon General did not suggest that we all wear masks indoors.

He suggests that if we get within six feet of one another, we should put on a mask. Interesting.

Different states interpret it differently.

[20:08] So, we in our church take a cautious view. We give it into your decision making. But we also ask you don't jump in somebody's face if you don't have a mask.

And, if you have a mask, don't condemn those who do. And if you don't wear a mask, don't... Yeah, you know what I'm saying. Okay. All right.

So, I'm getting tired of preaching here. Let's see. Am I on point three? Yeah. Okay. All right. So, finally then, we get to the point that I've been hesitant to talk about and that is the judgment seat.

Paul says, we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. and I know that when my life ends, I will stand before the judgment seat and my sins will be rolled out and it's going to be a long list and some of that list is from wartime activity.

Okay. Well, I know it's going to be rolled out and I know I'm guilty but I also know at that judgment seat Jesus is going to be standing beside me and he says, my blood acquits you.

[21:30] Praise God. And so, I don't have any right to condemn you or you don't have any right to condemn me. We're called to love the Lord, to be serious about how we live it and to give each other a break.

What's the 11th commandment? Don't sweat the small stuff. What's the 12th commandment? It's all small stuff.

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.