

Pt 46 Romans 14:1-6 Doubtful Disputations

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney, Porchlight Baptist Church www.pbcknox.com

Romans 14:1-6

1 Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.
2 For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.
3 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.
5 One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.
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.

Here in Chapter 14, we continue dealing with our actions toward our fellow man, but more specifically, a fellow weak Church member. Someone who is weak in the faith. In fact, that is how he starts out this section:

1 Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.

Someone who is weak in the faith is not necessarily a new Christian. There are many people that have been saved for a very long time, yet they are "weak in the faith." There were essentially two sets of people who are being singled out as weak in the faith;

1. Jews who used to practice Judaism but now had become Christian.
2. Gentiles who used to practice idolatry but now had become Christian.

Individuals of both these groups had yet to fully accept and embrace the freedom of their faith in Christ. They still wanted to cling to the religious practices and rules of their former faith instead of accepting and practicing the truths of their new faith.

Whether it be an issue over certain foods, dress, or holidays and feasts, some were still stuck in their former ways which obviously caused issues with other believers resulting in disputes. Paul called them "**doubtful disputations.**" That means disputes over doubtful things.

These disputes happened in two ways:

1. Those of the weaker faith who were clinging to their former religious ways would argue that those of the stronger faith were taking their Christian liberty way too far. Those with weak faith were usually very strict and felt like other Christians were wrong or being way too lax. They were usually really miserable people.
2. Those of the stronger faith would sit in judgement of Christians with weaker faith and accuse them of being narrow minded.

All of this causes disputations (disputes) among the brethren because they had doubts about one another.

2 For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. 3 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.

Here he lists off one of the things they disputed about. The Christian with stronger faith knows that all things are okay and lawful to eat but those of weaker faith and had been practicing avoiding certain food because they were unlawful, are still abstaining

from eating them. It would be very easy (and tempting) for those of stronger faith to judge the weaker Christian and treat him as inferior. Or perhaps get puffed up with pride and want to gloat about their strong faith.

This kind of thing is unknown to us because we were never in the Jews religion and practiced living under the Law, therefore, it may be difficult for us to fully understand why this was so significant. But that does not mean that it doesn't happen even in our Churches today. Let me give you an example.

While we most likely would never dispute with one another regarding eating meat, our Church is an Independent Baptist Church. We do not believe churches should be in any kind of convention such as the Southern Baptist Convention. We have certain standards that we adhere to, and we only use the King James version of the Bible. It would be easy for us to look at our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ that belong to a Southern Baptist Church and using a Holman Standard version of the Bible and see them as inferior. They may argue that we have too many standards and take our stance on the King James Bible way too far. Both sides have doubts about the other and it does not take much to get into a dispute.

The fact is, these kinds of arguments are not arguments over sin, but arguments over preferences. A lot of things that go on in churches under the name of religion is nothing but preferences.

We need to make sure we are not having disputes over preferences. If we are going to dispute over anything it should be about something we consider sinful and take a stand on it. But, if it is just a preference, we need to realize that and get along with our fellow church member.

Paul obviously had to confront this kind of thing a lot. Listen to what he wrote to the Church at Corinth:

1 Corinthians 8:4-13

4 As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.

5 For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,)

6 But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.

7 Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.

8 But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.

9 But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.

10 For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols;

11 And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?

12 But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.

13 Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

The Jews were strictly forbidden to eat meat that had been offered up as a sacrifice to idols and would stay as far away from it as possible. But those Christians who understood Grace, knew there was nothing wrong with eating this food because it meant nothing. However; Paul cautions those that understand their Christian liberty to not flaunt it in front of those weaker Christians and become a stumbling block to them. Paul went as far as to say that he himself would not eat any meat so he wouldn't offend his brother.

The fact is the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross fulfilled all the Law and did away with having to abstain from meats and other things considered unclean or forbidden under Judaism. Jesus said this: **Matthew 5:17** Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

With that being said, it was still very difficult for those who had lived under Judaism to break the hold it had over them.

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.

Here Paul asks the blunt question "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?"

In other words, "who do you think you are?" "Who gave you the right to judge others?" It's like a big kick in the pants.

...to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.

A Christian is a servant to God, not man. God is the Master and only He has the right to sit in judgement of who or what is his. Therefore, if someone is in the wrong, it is God's place to correct them, not ours.

5 One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. 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.

Now he brings up another subject that was being disputed – special days. This could be holidays or feast days, worship days, etc.

As New Testament Christians, we esteem Sunday above all the other days. It is the day we recognize that our Lord arose from the dead. It is the day we set aside for worship.

Yes, yes, I know, the Sabbath is Saturday because Saturday is the seventh day of the week. The 7th Day Adventists will say Baptist are sinful because we worship on Sunday and not Saturday.

The problem with that way of thinking is the New Testament never commands us to worship or hold Church on Saturday – never, not one time.

Also, in the Old Testament, Gentiles were never commanded to worship or observe the Sabbath and you will not find any instance in the Bible of Gentiles being condemned for not worshipping on the Sabbath.

In the Book of Genesis we read this: **Genesis 2:1-3** Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. 2 And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. 3 And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.

God did not rest because he was worn out or tired, that's not what this means. When it says God rested, it means he ceased from working.

Nowhere in that do you find a command for man to congregate together and worship on the seventh day or Sabbath day. We are only told, God rested on the seventh day, blessed it, and sanctified it.

And, for the next 2500-years, we do not read of anyone observing or worshipping on the Sabbath day.

It wasn't until God gave Moses the Law, that we see the command to "cease from labor," on the Sabbath day. The Sabbath was set aside as a day of rest and remembrance of what God has done. But it was not a day set aside to congregate together and worship.

Exodus 20:8-11 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: 10 But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: 11 For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

This may come as a shock to you, but you will not find that the Jews gathered together to worship on the Sabbath.

Something else that may shock you – Sunday is not a "replacement" for the Sabbath. Too many people have in their mind that Christians moved the Sabbath to Sunday, that's just not the case.

In the New Testament we are given one example of the Church meeting and a day is mentioned: **Acts 20:7** And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.

The first day of the week is Sunday. Doesn't matter if you are Jew or Gentile, the first day of the week is Sunday and that is when the early New Testament Church met.

Listen to what Paul wrote to the Church at Colossae; **Colossians 2:16-17** Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: 17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.

Here Paul clearly tells us the holydays and the sabbath days were "a shadow of things to come." These things were fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Again, what did Jesus say? **Matthew 5:17** Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

Listen to what else Jesus said concerning the sabbath:

Mark 2:23-28 And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn. 24 And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful? 25 And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him? 26 How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him? 27 And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: 28 Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.