



## Sermon, Sunday May 30, 2021, “Whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord”

**SCRIPTURE: Romans 14:1-13** <sup>1</sup> Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions. <sup>2</sup> Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. <sup>3</sup> Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. <sup>4</sup> Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand. <sup>5</sup> Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. <sup>6</sup> Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God. <sup>7</sup> We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. <sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. <sup>10</sup> Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. <sup>11</sup> For it is written, “As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God.” <sup>12</sup> So then, each of us will be accountable to God. <sup>13</sup> Let us therefore no longer pass judgment on one another, but resolve instead never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of another.

### **Introduction: The world we live in together**

There are many different people in our world. They live different ways of life. So, if we don't recognize diversity and instead force our thoughts and convictions on others, conflict arises. The Lord has told us to love our neighbors. He also said that those who love their neighbors are those who truly love the Lord.

Therefore, what we need to pay attention to in our Christian life is how to practice the love, mercy, forgiveness, and tolerance that the Lord has taught us. Today's text tells us what attitude we should have toward our neighbors with whom we live together. And today's text tells us why we should have that attitude, because we all belong to the Lord, and we stand before the judgment seat of the Lord.

### **Body: The Danger of Criticism**

Today's text is a letter sent to Greek and Jewish Christians living in Rome. The book of Romans covers the heart of the Christian gospel. The book of Romans is divided into two parts the chapters 1 through 11 doctrinally deal with the foundations of the gospel. The chapters 12 through 16 deal with how to apply the gospel to the life of the community.

Two types of groups appear in today's text. They are Jewish Christians and Greek Christians. Jewish Christians are not free from Jewish law, but Greek Christians are free from Jewish law. In addition, Jewish Christians have lost their vested interest in the church, while Greek Christians follow the initiative of the Roman church.

By the way, Jewish Christians stubbornly try to adhere to the Jewish law's standards for food and Jewish feasts. In contrast, Greek Christians are free from Jewish law. Two groups are in opposition within the



Roman church. There is a serious conflict between them. The apostle Paul notes the conflict within the community. He calls for reconciliation by saying that it is not right to criticize each other in the community. So, why should we achieve harmony instead of conflict?

### **1. Because we have no authority to interfere with the hospitality of the Lord.**

It is not easy to be free from customs and norms that are familiar to us because we have learned them over a long period of time. We need training to accept that there are many people in the world who have different ways of living. That is why the apostle Paul asks us not to be hostile to other persons because of things they say or do that we do not agree with. Furthermore, he tells us to treat them gently.

The Jewish Christians in today's text cannot eat meat offered to idols because of the Jewish law, so they eat only vegetables. To Greek Christians, these Jewish Christians are seen as weak people who do not understand the truth of the gospel.

However, the apostle Paul does not focus on the problem that caused the conflict between Jewish and Greek Christians. Instead, he focuses on the fact that both Jewish and Greek Christians are invited to the Lord's Table. The Lord, the master of the world, invited guests to the best feast. However, the invited guest cannot freely delete other invited guests from the guest list. A guest is not allowed to interfere with the host's hospitality for other guests. But now, the conflict in the Roman church is like a guest interfering with the hospitality of the Lord.

If there are guests who do not meet our standards, the Lord who invites them will correct the errors and teach us what we need to know.

Therefore, it is beyond our authority, as guests invited to the Lord's Table, to criticize the same guests. But in many cases we are often in a position of pride rather than humility.

When we experience conflict within a community, there must be faith and humility that do not forget that the objects of our conflict are invited to the Lord's holy table. It should not be forgotten that criticizing brothers and sisters is a proud act that interferes with the hospitality of the Lord. So, what is another reason to achieve harmony instead of conflict?

### **2. It is because we must answer the Lord for all our words and actions.**

In fact, conflicts are not easily resolved. If a conflict is easily resolved, there is no reason for us to struggle when there is a conflict. However, conflict is not easy to resolve because it is based on sin, which is our essence.

Then, in today's text, why do Jewish Christians insist only on vegetarianism and insist that there are special days among many days? It is because they think that way is for the Lord. Likewise, food or special days are not a concern for Greek Christians, because they think it is for the Lord. Here, the apostle Paul finds the point of contact between conflicting Jewish Christians and Greek Christians. All of them make such claims in order to serve the Lord more properly.

But the apostle Paul is not saying that we are free to act on the matters of food and Jewish feasts. The apostle Paul says that it is our responsibility to answer the Lord for our words and actions through our conscience instead of each other during conflict over matters.



If the actions we have done are not guilty and are done with sincerity before the Lord, there is no problem, but if we feel guilty before the Lord for our words and actions, it is said to be a sin.

Therefore, we should be able to turn our eyes that were criticizing our brothers and sisters in conflict and see the Lord. The Lord forgives us and bears the cross. Also, the Lord sacrificed Himself instead of criticizing us. **Romans 14:8** say, "**We are the Lord's**". Like this verse, our master is the Lord. The Lord saved us through His sacrifice. So we live to the Lord and we die to the Lord. Also, we belong to the Lord.

**Romans 14:10** say to us, "**Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God.**"

Please remember! **Romans 14:11** says, "**As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God.**" This verse means that at the time of God's judgment, we must speak directly to the Lord of our words and actions.

Now, we shouldn't be fools who waste our time and passion in conflict. And there must be wisdom to minimize waste caused by conflict.

We are all owned by the Lord, and we live or die for the Lord. The time will surely come when we confess all our words and actions to the Lord. At that time, we hope to be among all who are not ashamed.

**Conclusion: Remember the grace of the cross.**

Now let's summarize today's sermon. Up to the day of our death it is likely we will meet someone we cannot agree with in words and actions. Each time we will be tempted to judge our neighbors by our standards. At that moment, please remember today's text.

We have no authority to interfere with the hospitality of the Lord's invited guests. We are also responsible to the Lord to answer our words and actions with conscience. Our duty to the Lord is based on the Lord's love for the cross. We are being forgiven by the grace of the Lord and granted the opportunity to live with new life.

Love breaks down sin, lifts us up, and produces abundant fruit. Instead, criticism toward neighbors knocks them over, discourages them, and stays under the power of sin. May all of us live abundant lives with responsibility and belonging with the Lord.

