

July 7, 2019 19051-A # 40

Romans 14:1-12

No Nitpicking

I. Mark 7:1-23. Jesus stuns the religious establishment...

A. Jesus takes authority over the tradition and the OT—all religious thought.

1. He redirects the faith of these people, off their OT interpretation (which had become profoundly rigid and legalistic) and on to Him personally. **Jn.5:39**
2. He points out that it is the heart (cognition, intuition, volition) of man that needs cleansed and forgiven and regenerating.
3. He re-structures their thinking regarding how to live for God.

B. This transformation is what happens when the Lord pulls us out of religion (or philosophy, or naturalism, or spiritism) and into Him.

1. *This transformation is what happened to Paul when the Lord revealed the gospel to him.*

C. This gospel transformation is the point of Romans 12-15. 12:1-2

1. God has transferred us into his kingdom by grace through faith in Christ.

II. Two particular issues that plagued the 1st century church.

A. Food Rules (Kosher)

1. The OC clearly and precisely forbade certain foods.
2. In the Gentile world, meat was often sacrificed to idols before being sold in the market, raising the question of disloyalty to the Lord if they ate it.
3. The NC has no food rules at all. **Mk. 7:19; 1 Cor. 8:8; 1 Tim. 4:1-4.**
 - a) The only “rule” is to not stumble somebody else with your liberty.

B. Holy Days

1. In the OC the calendar was part of the worship, very structured and strict. Sabbath days, Feasts, etc.
2. In the NC, the calendar is not central to worship and the “holy days” are not repeated anywhere. See **Colossians 2:16-17**

C. Note: this is not primarily about what they do in their personal homes, but in the Christian gatherings, the love feasts, etc.

1. Paul clearly distinguishes public from private later in the chapter.

III. The Roman Christians were divided on these. Romans 14:1-12. Read the passage.

A. Two arguing groups.

1. Strong in faith: Those who understood the radical implications of the gospel.
 - a) Paul addresses this group primarily. 14:1
 - b) He puts himself in this group. “we who are strong ...” 15:1
 - c) This group was “strong” because their understanding of “day” and “foods” was in line with the gospel. (Gal.2:14)
2. Weak in faith: Those who did not yet understand the implications of the gospel and had a weak conscience on many extra things.
 - a) Weak faith here probably does not mean simply “immature” or “young” in the faith. It refers to a weakness in understanding the full ramifications of the faith that they already understand in other ways.
 - b) It doesn’t mean their faith wasn’t genuine, but that it lacked strength to trust Christ without keeping Jewish laws.
 - c) *Interesting: When you find people in this head-space about adiaphora, they invariably feel that they are strong in faith rather than weak.*

B. One main clarification. Both groups were genuine believers who sincerely wanted to please the Lord in their behavior and worship. 6-7.

1. The issues were not central to the gospel.
 - a) **Adiaphora** = Greek term = stuff that doesn't matter.
 - b) Not about changing the gospel itself. The Galatian heresy was an actual alteration of the gospel itself that added Torah obedience to faith in Christ. Gal.1:1-10
 - c) Not promoting unethical or immoral behavior. Paul warned against immorality of all kinds. (Gal.5:13-55; 1 Thess.4:1-8; 1Cor 5-6)
2. So, the strong were not "antinomian."
 - a) They were under the Law of Christ, which certainly included moral instruction and commands of Jesus. (1 Cor.9:21; Gal.6:2)
3. And the weak were not "Galatian legalist/heretics."
 - a) If they had been, Paul would not have been as gentle with them. (see above and read Galatians)

C. One main exhortation to both groups: *Stop Nit Picking!!*

1. First, to those whose faith is **strong**: *Don't regard the weaker one with contempt.*
 - a) Contempt = to treat as though they do not matter, are worthless, despised, contempt, deep repugnance.
2. Second, to those whose faith is **weak**: *Don't judge the people who have let go the food and day laws.*
 - a) Judge = pass judgment, tell them they are not pleasing God.
 - b) *The weak apparently thought is right to tell the strong that they were not pleasing the Lord and that they might not stand in the judgment.*
3. *Note the vicious cycle of acrimony when one treats the other as stupid and worthless and then the other treats them back with increased judgmentalism.*

D. The Lord is transforming our hearts to be wise and gracious.

IV. Five suggestions to avoid becoming a nitpicker...

A. Study the gospel enough to discern what is important and what is not.

1. Gospel: Jesus is the Risen and Saving Lord. Rom.10:9-10
 - a) Who Jesus is. God's Son, God in the flesh
 - b) What he has done. Died and Risen
 - c) Simple Faith. Rom.3:28
2. We must learn the gospel and its implications throughout our lives.
 - a) The implications of the gospel are what the NT is all about.

B. Trust God with other people's discipleship. 4

1. There is a limit to what you can know about another person's motives and destiny.
2. There is a limit to your authority to meddle in another's walk.

C. Live personally for an audience of One. 5. 1 Cor.4:1-5

1. Fully convinced in our own mind = a clear conscience based on gospel knowledge.
2. There is a responsibility for each person to be convinced internally.

D. Remember you will have your exit interview with the Lord. 10-12. 2 Cor 5: 10

1. *A rescued and forgiven life can still be evaluated for reward.*
2. *If you are trusting God's grace in your failings, can't you extend that to others?*

E. Rest more in what the Lord has done for you than what you do for him. 9 Key in strong faith.

1. *This is why Christ died and came back from the dead—to be the saving Lord of all of us, living and graduated.*