

[Romans 14:1 – 5]

~ In our last report from our Spiritual Safari, we examined the proper conduct of behavior for a Christian – the law of love towards our neighbor; acceptable Christian life and service. That is a very controversial chapter. In this report, we come to an even more controversial section of Scripture. The question we must ask now is: what about those things that the Bible *doesn't* explicitly address? Some people call them “*gray areas*” of the law. Well, if our safari stirred up a hornets nest in the first part of Romans – and we did – then what we’re going to do now is take away the cubs from momma bear and see what happens! There are whole bunches of people – in fact, every single one – of the super-duper saints, just aren’t going to appreciate this leg of our expedition through the entire Word of God.

This report is an extremely difficult instruction from God. Paul wrote this epistle to the Romans, though, my beloved – not me. If you can pray and ask for discernment and understanding from the Spirit of God through this report, then I know it will bless your heart in a way that nothing has been helpful to you before. This is the message the Lord has transmitted to us by His Holy Spirit in the Word of God through His chosen and Personally ordained apostle.

There are two areas of Christian conduct; but only one of those areas is the Bible clear about. Our last report was easy enough, because Paul took the commandments themselves and showed us that this “*new age morality*” just doesn’t happen to be for the genuine Christian. Now, if you somehow think the Bible is outdated, or there’s more to the total equation than the Word of God; then there’s no sense you and I discussing it, because I have nothing else to say. I’m not going to add to the Bible or condone you taking away from it. Christ condemns that. So, this so-called safari condemns it. Anyone who says they can be a Christian and, for example, believe they can commit adultery, lie, cheat, steal, be envious or hateful, well, I am here to tell you: you aren’t a Christian. You may be religious; but you’re not saved. You can just take my word for it.

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However, there are some areas of Christian conduct where the Bible is either not clear or totally silent. Should a Christian woman use make-up? The Bible isn't clear on that. What about smoking? Is that something a Christian can or cannot do? How do you judge conduct relative to those things? Are there things that are right in one place but not in another? Are there things that are right for me but not for you? Well, don't worry, I'm not about to stick my neck out and give you my list of rules and regulations; but Paul is going to give us three guidelines of how to figure out the correct answer to *ALL* of the questionable matters in life.

First, a Christian must have a sharp conviction about anything and everything he does. Conviction means anticipating and looking forward to the things he is going to do. The second thing that must guide a genuine Christian is a conscience; but it must be exercised in a pro-active way – and that requires learning the Word of God properly, correctly and completely. Have you ever looked back on something you've done and hate yourself for having done it? Maybe there is wondering whether you did the right thing. Well, the third guideline to questionable matters is a *consideration of others*. We must always consider how others are being affected by what we are saying and doing.

There are two extreme viewpoints that create an artificial atmosphere in which certain people attempt to exist. I think we have many abnormal and subnormal Christians living in our extreme end times. One position has no wall of separation from the world at all; basically, God loves you and anything goes. These Christians' lives are almost always a carbon copy of the natural man in the world with just a little bit of church sprinkled in for credibility. There is really no difference in their lives as a Christian and their lives before their so-called conversion. You will find them in every place the world is, and you won't be able to differentiate them from the lost crowd. They invest all their time and energy in things that profit no one. They aren't going to be taking twenty minutes to read a report like this. Certain passages have absolutely no meaning to them whatsoever.

Philippians 3:17 *Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. 18 (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the*

enemies of the cross of Christ: 19 Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things) ~

There are many things that many Christian's say they don't do. Interestingly, they are as worldly as any group of people could possibly be! They over-talk and talk over you; and they are biting gossips. They live in those circles – just like the world – because they are of the world. They usually have some questionable story or joke to tell, too, by the way. So, what things do you think about? Our thought life will deeply affect our conduct in one way or another.

Philippians 4: 8 *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things ~*

Alright, there is another group who become extreme in an opposite direction. They have reduced the Christian life to a series of negatives. Paul said in Colossians, *“touch not, taste not, handle not...”* That's this groups' motto; and they don't need any other Scripture. They are much more dangerous than the first crowd. Paul even warns against them. It will do you well to stay far away from those who are living a so-called “separated life;” and you'll also do well to *fear* them. They typically rejoice in salvation by grace and deliverance from the law, but they have made a new set of commandments and they don't stop at ten! They're usually very self-centered, critical and shamefully proud. Paul calls them, *“weak in the faith!”* That type of separation will never bring joy in our life.

Now, somewhere between these two extremes, the believer is to walk and have his being down here in the world but not be of the world; this is truly Scylla and Charybdis on the spiritual sea of our Christian life! We needed this lengthy introduction because right now many Christians are absolutely puzzled by life. They have no idea why they aren't happy, joyful Christians full of natural love. Well, if you have prayed for wisdom, judgment and discernment in the Word of God, Paul can speak to you now....

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

~ We are to accept other men without judgment of their viewpoint or conduct *concerning these gray areas of conduct* we are discussing. Paul said the law of love covered all of the law. Love covers a multitude of sins. Well, this is where the law of love is physically implemented. Whereas, Paul condemned certain things in chapter thirteen, he now warns against condemning questionable matters. There are certain things that are not expressly forbidden in Scripture; and we're each going to have our own convictions about those things. Paul was almost found waxing *ex Cathedra* in verse one, by the way.

"Weak in the faith" refers *only* to a particular abstract quality of faith in this section of Scripture. It means the faith of the weak person falters and hesitates when tested against the matters of conduct that are our subject in this passage. These people never know what to do under pressure. Well, we're to receive them with open arms and exhort, reprove and admonish them in love. We likely will not agree with them, but we are to receive them; but not participate in any form of argument with them concerning their extreme separation. No group of believers is to sit in judgment over another group of believers regarding questionable matters of Christian conduct. The church has no authority to decide questions of personal liberty....

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

~ The *STRONG* brother is the one eating all things, my beloved. The *WEAK* brother is the vegetarian food legalist! The strong and instructed brothers have learned that Jesus has made all meats clean. After the flood, the standard became *"every moving thing shall be meat for you. Even as the green herb have I given you all things."* That's Genesis chapter nine verse three, by the way. God made a distinction between clean and unclean animals to the nation Israel; but remember, whether we eat meat or don't eat meat, it commendeth us not to God. Neither if we eat are we the better nor if we don't eat are we the worse. Simon Peter was given this practical

lesson on the rooftop of Simon the Tanner's house down in Joppa. Simon Peter was proud of the fact he had never eaten anything unclean. The Holy Spirit told him not to call unclean what the Lord had cleansed and calls clean....

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.

~ I realize I am wrong when I make condemning statements about the extreme separationists. If they want to be that way, quite frankly, that's their business – not mine. I think the problem I have with them is they expect me to adopt their philosophy. Now, I probably need some new policies - but vegetarians aren't the people to model it for me, I assure you of that. So, we need to come to terms with this principle and understand that "meat" could refer to almost anything that is ingested. If you have a conviction that you shouldn't eat meat, then my suggestion is – don't....

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.

~ We have no right to judge other children of God regarding the questionable matters we are talking about in this section of Scripture. I report directly to my Father in Heaven – not you. God's children aren't accountable to either of us in any way, shape or form. We aren't going to stand before each other to give account of our lives, friends; we're going to stand before God Himself in that day concerning *OUR OWN* lives – *NOT* each other's lives. How childish can we really get?

We can know what's right by asking ourself if we have *ANY* doubt about the matter at hand. If there is *ANY* question about the correctness of any particular thing in your life, it's wrong; no matter what it is. I'm not sure why most people miss verse five regarding the question of the Sabbath. So many people are insistent that the Lord's Day is different and that we

should observe worship on Sunday. Some say we are to worship on Saturday. I, personally, think Sunday has a Biblical basis as the early church met on Sunday; and that's the day Christ arose from the dead. However, if you want to worship on Saturday, that's okay; because sometimes I worship on Tuesday nights with a ham sandwich in my hand.

You aren't responsible to me and, likewise, neither am I to you! We are *BOTH* responsible to the Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever we do today, friends – let's do it with enthusiasm and for His glory! That's one of the unfortunate reasons people don't go to church anymore; is because there is no enthusiasm – only fighting about pork chops and bacon. People can get more excitement from a football game than a church service; so, you can't blame them for skipping church and going straight for the football. The church should be vibrant and exciting; but it isn't — and that's shameful. Tragically, it is you and me who are to blame for the condition of the church today — Selah ~