

God-Centered Days and Day

Romans 14:5-9

In 1662, Charles II of England passed the Act of Uniformity in Britain.

All ministers in the church State Church including Presbyterian and Congregationalist ministers had to use the Book of Common Prayer, which was strongly Anglican, including priestly robes and celebrating holy days.

The Puritan ministers had no choice but to leave. They could live with these ceremonies if permitted by the church. But when they were made law and imposed, it was a duty for them to make a stand. So 2000 godly pastors were kicked out of the church. And a terrible time of most horrid persecution followed.

This tells us how important the principles in Romans 14 are to the church.

Paul speaks of love between stronger and weaker brothers, not war.

There are differences in the church stemming from weaker believers. Immaturity, cultural blindness, some worldly baggage hindered them.

Paul however commands the strong not to judge them for abstaining from meat. And the weak were not to hold the strong in contempt for liberty. Why? Because God accepts both!

Our passage today turns to a different but more familiar topic – observing holy days. Should we celebrate the OT feast days of

Passover, of the Day of Atonement, or other festivals? And so another situation of showing love for each other among the strong and weak.

Read vs. 5.

Our first point: touching on the **character of the debate**, what is meant by these days being observed?

We need to read Galatians 4:10-11 and Colossians 2:16-17 alongside.

¹⁰ You observe **days** and **months** and **seasons** and **years**. ¹¹ I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain. (Gal 4:10-11)

¹⁶ Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a **festival** or a **new moon** or a **Sabbath day**-- ¹⁷ things which are a *mere* shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ. (Col 2:16-17)

Paul sees a mandatory placing of one day above another which is an attack on the gospel.

In Galatians = they are part of the weak and beggarly elements. In Colossians = a replacing of Christ the body by these shadow days!

The Roman's passage tells of some in the church continuing OT Jewish feasts. But not in a way as to destroy the gospel as in these other two places.

We have similar conditions today. There are communions who have an entire calendar of high days throughout the year. Advent, Epiphany, Lent and Ash Wednesday, Easter, and Pentecost.

The Roman Catholics fill their calendars with all kinds of saints being remembered – including Mary on January 1st.

Are any of these mandated by Scripture in the New Covenant? NO!
Are they entirely harmless and neutral? Again, NO!

But the Romans passage says the keeping of holy days is because of a weak grasp on our New Testament condition.

Does that mean no Christmas sermon, no Palm Sunday message, or Easter celebration? No – not exactly. But it does become a problem when the weak demand such messages, as though they are mandated.

In truth, the Reformation served to cast out much of that calendar and the Christianity which flourished in the early years of our nation did not celebrate Christmas, Easter or religious Holidays as such.

What they did celebrate though was the Lord's Day, the 4th Command, keeping the Sabbath holy.

Now this matter of the Sabbat falls under this first heading. What is the character of the debate?

Because there are those who say this and the other passages are doing away with one of the Ten Commandments! The weekly Sabbath.

They want to read 'one day' above another as eliminating the Sabbath Day!

Even some sound Presbyterians have fallen for this error. Dr. Boice writes 'I do not believe you are breaking the Sabbath by eating out on Sunday, playing ball with your children, going to a football game or even going to a movie!'

But there is a clear difference even in the OT between Jewish ritual Sabbaths tied to annual feasts and new moons. These were called a Sabbath, or my Sabbath, or plural, Sabbaths as part of a holy week.

These were part of the Ceremonial Law awaiting the coming of Jesus.

But the Sabbath Day each week is not part of the Ceremonial Code fulfilled in Christ, but part of the moral law. This Sabbath was before Moses, from the dawn of creation. This was not given to the Jews alone but to mankind. In fact the Jews observed the Sabbath before the giving to the law, in Exodus 16.

The Lord's Day is both a moral and a redemptive precept. It speaks of how we are created in God's image and to follow him, and it speaks of how we need a re-creation by the cross of Jesus, who is the Lord of the Sabbath!

Jesus came not to abolish the law but to fulfill it. And while we have greater promises, one of them is not, 'you won't have to keep the Sabbath day holy'.

Hebrews 4 tells that as long as we are on this side of our heavenly Canaan, sojourning in the wilderness in faith, we have a Sabbath keeping; we need a Sabbath keeping!

It is a sin therefore, not to keep the Lord's Day holy, not to keep the Lord's day.

But it is no longer a sin to forget the OT feast days. But it is an act of a weak faith if someone does, so they are to be endured in love. Calvin calls them in a bit of an unloving way, "tolerable fooleries".

Thus far the character of the debate.

It is understandable that such discussions and differences would arise, given a high view of the OT Scriptures. But the differences were to be met with love.

Let us come to the second point made by Paul: the character of the question is succeeded by the consecration of every Christian.

What a hearty commitment all believers are to have to Christ! We see this in the repeated phrase, “for the Lord”. No less than 5 times.

Both weak and strong, convinced in their own mind, observes or does not observe these holy days, for or better “to” the Lord.

Paul argues by this for tolerance in the church – that is, this consecration to the Lord. See three things about this devotion.

First, it is an *extensive* consecration. What we do, even down to what we eat and drink to His glory, how He is to be worshipped and served in all of life – is to be paramount on both sides!

In bold letters over each side: “Give thanks in all things!”

So while we differ in lesser matters, all the parts of life must be viewed as set apart or sanctified to the Lord.

All of us have lessons to learn in this department – even from weaker brethren. How often even a newly saved soul can reprove our lack of zeal and commitment.

Second, Christian consecration is *intensive*.

Your minds are to be fully persuaded – no doubt a backwards glance to 12:2. To Timothy, Paul wrote: ⁴ *For everything created by God is*

good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude; ⁵ for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer. (1Tim 4:4-5)

Christian consecration is so much a matter of your heart, that if the heart is not in it, it matters not what else you have!

Then third, Christian consecration is ***all-encompassing***. The text says none of us lives to himself and none of us dies to himself.

Life and death covers all experience for us. Wherever you meet a believer, you meet a pilgrim who is heading to heaven! Be careful that you don't harm them, put a stumbling stone before them, but help them in their race.

See how Christian consecration is reaching both life and death, a wonderful kingdom that extends from this age to the age to come.

“We are the Lord’s” says Paul – whether in life, in death or in eternity. Nothing can separate us from Him!

Will you believe Him who is your life? Him, in whom you are hidden? Him, in whose death you died and are raised with Him?

Let your consecration to Him be extensive and intensive, all-encompassing and all-embracing.

It is that consecration for which Christ came, for which He died, for which Christ rose again, for which Christ intercedes, for which Christ returns.

Our last point is Christ’s Lordship as the basis of mutual tolerance.

“To the Lord” is repeated 8; but in 8b and 9, Paul writes “of the Lord”.

What can we say of Christ’s Lordship?

Let us underline just four qualities as we wrap up.

First, the Lordship of Jesus is divine.

There is a shift from God the Father in the first four verses to the Lord Jesus in 5-9.

The name “LORD” is fully placed on Jesus by the Father and all throughout the New Testament.

In Christ, all the fullness of the Godhead is bodily revealed and brought into our weak sight.

In particular, it is as the Mediator between God and man, the only Redeemer, which stands out. Christ died and lived again for a certain people, his people, who are a saved people, bought with a price and rescued from the depths of death.

Then he is **secondly** Lord over creation as well as His people. The maker of the first man has become the last man, the God/Man.

And so he is Lord of them whether dead or alive; past or present.

He is our saving Lord until death, and through death, and beyond to all eternity.

Then **third** take his Lordship as mighty, almighty, omnipotent – effectual for all He sets out to do.

There is no limit to his dominion over all for His people.

And this is revealed in their conversion and bodily resurrection.

Jesus fits you by His Spirit for everlasting glory. You have a house, eternal, made by God!

Jesus raises you with a resurrection which began when you were born again.

Oh, the glorious, life-giving, life-making, soul-saving work of Jesus our Lord!

His Lordship is divine, universal, mediatorial, and effectual.

Jesus is the Lord of all believers before His coming.

Jesus is Lord of all His here and now scattered throughout the earth.

Jesus is the Lord of all in this present evil age as He lifts people up and out of their dungeons of guilt and chains of sin.

Jesus is the Lord of the age to come. A Name that is above every name as Alpha and Omega, Beginning and End, First and Last, King of kings, Lord of lords, Master of all.

If you are weak, Jesus calls you to grow, as He does to all His trees of righteousness. Jesus will keep you and add to you.

If you are strong, Jesus calls you to use your maturity for good and not evil. Jesus will bless and restore all you give away.

“None is so at liberty as the Lord’s freedman; none so in bonds as the Lord’s slave.” Martin Luther

Let us take on his yoke afresh today and learn of our Lord Savior afresh – his yoke is easy, his burden light, as it is a yoke of love, and burden of glory.

Pray: We bless you our Lord, that we have an anchor in the heavenlies, steadfast, immoveable, overflowing with true and solid hope; even Jesus who has entered beyond the veil through His own

once-crucified, now raised flesh. Interceded for us, one and all, Lord; send help to our hearts and homes, to our bonds and walk unto you. Be our able Redeemer and bless the communion of your church and all its moving parts. Help us not be children – tossed around by every wind of doctrine... Eph. 4.