

Be Fully Convinced

📖 Romans 14:5-12

👤 Pastor Jeremy Thomas

📅 February 21, 2016

🌐 fbgbible.org

📍 Fredericksburg Bible Church

107 East Austin Street

Fredericksburg, Texas 78624

(830) 997-8834

There were two questions last week. I'm always happy to get questions. We are here to learn. Sometimes someone has thought of something that I haven't thought of or wonders how some passage is not in contradiction to what I am teaching in some text. If you don't ask questions I can't know that. I do try to predict the questions people might have and address those but I can never predict all of them. I'm merely a human. The important thing is to ask the question by putting it in the box. There is nothing to be afraid of. I am not afraid of any question you might have. I am here to learn too. That is what I do for a living. The questions give me work and some of you aren't giving me any work to do. I am asking you to. That is what I am here for and I am always open to looking at the text.

Q1: Was Jesus born strong in the faith?

A1: This was asked because I stated that no one is born strong in the faith, that we are all born weak. Of course, by all I was referring to all believers but we can look at it anyhow. A more applicable question might be to ask it with respect to John the Baptist since he had the Holy Spirit from physical birth but I will answer it with respect to Jesus. Since the expression "the faith" refers to the system of Christian doctrine then with respect to Jesus we must look at this question from who He is in hypostasis. The doctrine of hypostasis says that Jesus Christ is undiminished deity united with true humanity in one person without mixture or confusion forever. We can distinguish His two natures but we can't separate Him into two persons. From the standpoint of His divine nature He is omniscient; He knows all things actual and possible, He never learns anything. Therefore, from His divine nature He did not learn the system of Christian doctrine. He always knew it. However, from the standpoint of His human nature He had a finite human mind, He had to learn things, albeit unencumbered by a sinful nature. Therefore, from His human nature He did have to learn the system of Christian doctrine. This is confirmed by both the OT by way of prediction and by the NT by way of fulfillment. Isaiah 50:4-5 predicted that the Messiah in His human nature would learn. Isaiah says, "The Lord God has given Me the tongue of disciples. That I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple. The Lord God has opened My ear; And I was not disobedient..." This Scripture predicted that the Messiah would be awakened every morning by the Father who would teach Him. This is evidence that in His

human nature He had to grow in knowledge in the same way that He had to eat to grow in physical stature. Luke 2:52 fulfills the prediction of Isaiah. Luke says, "And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." This very clearly teaches that in His human nature Jesus grew mentally and physically. So from the standpoint of the hypostatic union when we look at His divine nature He did not learn but from His human nature the OT predicted that He would learn and the NT fulfilled that He did learn. When viewed from the standpoint that He is one person He did learn. This necessity of learning is a corollary to His true humanity and does not infringe upon the truth that He was forever God, sinless in human nature and although tempted in all things as we yet without any personal sin. The question is interesting but I'm not sure how relevant in Paul's context of weaker/stronger believers.

Q2: Is sending a Christian child to public school an amoral issue?

A2: That's a good question. Someone noticed I did not include it in the list last week. Of course, my list was just a sampling and not intended to be exhaustive. I will let you answer that question yourself by giving some issues you want to consider in answering the question. A simple answer on this question leaves a lot to be desired because the Bible has a lot to say about issues that are directly related to the question. First, the teacher's character must be examined. What if the teacher is a homosexual? What if they are a chronic liar? What if they are an atheist? Are all of these character qualities in a teacher acceptable for the Christian parent to put their child under their control and authority? We must remember that a child's mind is fertile and they naturally respond to an authority figure. What does the Bible say about anyone causing a child to stumble? That it is better that a millstone be hung around their neck and dropped to the bottom of the ocean than for one to cause one of these little ones to stumble. Second, what about the curriculum? Core curriculum is a result of John Dewey. He was a socialist, a humanist, an evolutionist and it was in the 1930's that every major educational venue in America was completely and irreversibly influenced by Dewey to fundamentally change this nation. He wrote more than 50,000 articles distributed to every branch of education. If we put our children in this system we need to understand that they are going to be taught socialism, humanism and evolutionism because it is Core Curriculum. Are we prepared as parents to undo the false thinking patterns that they will inevitably be taught? Do we have that kind of time? Do we have that kind of expertise? Are we remembering that Satan masquerades as an angel of light so that these doctrines are taught as being good when they are actually evil? Third, what about the methodology being used? We know that they use relativist methodology to indoctrinate the children into relativism. I have personally evaluated material in the public schools as recent as 2015. I have seen the relativist methods and they are difficult to detect except by the most astute thinkers. I don't think many parents, much less the kids, can detect them, especially since they were trained in the same system a generation removed. Fourth, what about the element of peer influence? Peer influence in social philosophy is considered more important than family influence. In other words, the system is designed to breed rebellion on the part of the children against the parents. This was part of Dewey's original desire to break down the Judeo-Christian worldview of the family and to create one big global socialist village. Fifth, what about the physical safety of the

children? A lot of this has been about the spiritual well-being of the children but what about the physical safety? Are they going to get drugged? Are they going to get raped? Are they going to get beat up? Are they going to get shot? These are real questions that increasingly are manifesting themselves because our entire culture has rejected God and these are the consequences we're having to pay. I'm bringing these things up because this is not a simple question with a simple answer. Here's the most important question you need to ask yourself: "Is there a point where I would not send my child to public school?" If so what is that point? What this question is doing is showing you that the issues of Romans 14 can be amoral on a level but when taken too far they become immoral. Take alcohol, for example. Is there anything immoral about drinking alcohol? No, not if you are of age, it's an amoral issue. But is it okay to drink a lot of alcohol? No, and the reason is because of the impairing effects. I realize the impairing process is different for different people but the thing about most alcohol is that the effects can be controlled by the amount of drinking. It is very different than marijuana because it's an either-or with marijuana, either you are high or you are not high and there really is no in-between buffer zone. So it's automatically immoral because the Bible says that deliberate impairment of mental faculties is sinful (Eph 5:18). But what I'm trying to get you to see with the public school issue is it's more like alcohol; it can be taken too far and then what was amoral becomes immoral. *The question here is when has the American public educational system gone too far?* Christian parents are answering that question differently because they have different convictions about where the line is. But I think it's important to recognize that there is a line somewhere and once it crosses that line it is immoral and you have to say, "No, we cannot send our child to public education in good conscience." Now if you don't see any line then you might consider that your conscience has been seared. This is the same thing with watching movies. How much of it should you put up with? Not how much can you put up with? How much should you put up with? It's okay to watch movies but when does the content of the movie, thematic or otherwise go too far? How much language should you put up with? How much violence? How much immodesty? I think everyone would agree there is a point where it has gone too far and it is no longer amoral to watch but immoral. Same thing for reading books; books are just movies in print and all movies come from books or scripts so it's the same issue, words paint pictures. You can't read soft porn or hard porn literature and say that's okay, it's sin plain and simple... So that's how I suggest you consider the question of public education. And by the way, I wouldn't limit it to sending your child to public education. I'd say the same question has to be asked about sending your child to private school, summer camp or VBS. Is it an amoral issue? Would you send your child to a VBS at a Charismatic Church? Isn't there a line somewhere? I've faced this very issue since I've been here. Some local VBS was teaching their theology to our kids and it disagreed with our theology and the parents didn't like it. The parents made the decision not to send their child. Another Christian parent may make a different decision. I'm not telling you what to do. I'm telling you that the things that are amoral all become immoral at some point and I think it's a fact that the American education system has changed over the last 200 years and I think that because of that you have to be continually evaluating these kinds of questions. Any one of these things, curriculum, character, safety, et. al. can be pushed outside of bounds. Where is the line? When is enough...enough? And "What is my heart motive here? Why am I sending my child to public

school? Why am I sending him to VBS or summer camp? Why am I doing what I am doing?" I hope that helps you work through these types of issues that we all have a responsibility to work through so that we are walking upright before the Lord.

Last time we worked with Romans 14:1-4. We said that the issues here are not doctrinal and they are not sin but they are scruples, twinges of conscience, things that got embedded in our thinking from our culture that cause our conscience to alert us, such things as playing cards, dancing, drinking a glass of wine, watching sports, etc...and again, it's the same story, you can take watching sports from something amoral, which is watching a game or two or following a team, to something immoral by watching sports all day long and the reason it has become immoral is because you are wasting time which violates Eph 5:15, you are neglecting relationships which is many passages and so forth and so on. But then, let's say your job is watching sports, you are a coach or something. Well, of course you must view it differently. What I'm trying to do is get you to be very practical and realistic and we've had to spend quite an amount of time on these issues because it's very important and it hits home with all of us.

I mentioned last week that you need to have balance. Don't be out of balance. This is very important. So many Christians are not in balance and the Christian life is one of balance. Are you living a balanced life? Another thing is living with other Christians in unity and harmony. Being united on things that really matter and being in harmony on things that don't really matter. There was an old saying that captured this well, "In essentials unity; in non-essentials, harmony." I think that's pretty good. With respect to doctrine, unity, with respect to scruples, harmony.

In 14:1 Paul commands the brother strong in the faith to welcome in his circle the brother who is weak in the faith, AS HE IS. And not to welcome him into his circle for the purpose of straightening him out on some scruple. It is sin to welcome him for that purpose. You must accept him AS HE IS. The situation in 14:2 and through the whole chapter is not directly stated but we know from other passages that Jews and Gentiles had to get along together in the Church and so cultural issues they had absorbed into their conscience that were amoral had to be viewed with consideration on both sides. In 14:2 Paul gives an example of a Gentile who is strong in the faith and he may eat all things as contrasted to a Jew who is weak in the faith and can eat vegetables only. In 14:3 the Gentile is commanded to not look with disdain on the Jew who does not eat all things and the Jew is commanded to not judge the Gentile who does eat all things. The reason set forth is because God has accepted both of them. That is what is really important. God has accepted them and so are you not to accept them? In 14:4 Paul asks the brother weak in the faith, "Who are you to judge the servant of another?" Obviously no one. Their judge is Jesus Christ. So in these first four verses the principle is that both sides should be considerate of the other side and not hold with contempt or judge the other on scrupulous issues since both are servants of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Today we come to 14:5-12 and here we find another issue; the issue of days. **One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike.** In the context the issue is probably between Jews and Gentiles. The **person** who **regards one day above another** is a Jew. The Jews were raised to regard the Sabbath and feast days above other days. Because of this the Jews did not open their shops on Sabbath or Feast days. When they came into the Christian life they still regarded these days above other days. This was built up into their sensitivities and so it was important for them to keep. This was their scruple. They were weak in the faith because in the Church age there is no command to keep the Sabbath or Feast days. That may surprise you but the command on what days to keep is this verse and the command is not to condemn someone for keeping Sabbath and not to condemn someone for not keeping Sabbath. You have freedom to keep it and freedom not to keep it. It is really not an issue. But for a Jew it was so they had to keep it and all the feast days and today some Gentiles try to keep these things. But then the Gentiles regarded **every day alike.** They were not raised to regard certain days as above other days. For them every day was just another day. They were strong in the faith because there is no command in the Church age to keep Sabbath, meet on Sundays, observe Christmas or Easter, attend national prayer days or any of those things. Those are all days one may observe but one is not required to observe. You have the freedom to keep them and the freedom not to keep them. We are free. But when you had both Jews and Gentiles coming into the Church with these differences built up in their conscience, how were they going to get along with one another? Verses 1-4 said both sides are to be considerate of the other; accept one another as each of you are. That's easy. Right? No. Watch sometime at Christmas. Some families want to keep Christmas. Some families do not. Okay. What's your problem? There is nothing wrong with celebrating Christmas and there is nothing wrong with not celebrating Christmas. Now there could be something wrong with celebrating it if you overspend. See, everything can be pushed too far. What about Easter? Do we have to keep that day? No. There is nothing wrong with not celebrating Easter! These things are non-essentials and in the non-essentials there is to be harmony.

Additionally, Paul gives an important principle in 14:5b; **Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind.** The **mind** is where the standards for right and wrong are held and the conscience judges according to those standards. The mind received these standards from the various influences of his culture. Now when we become Christians we are to be transformed by the renewing of our mind. Of course this is a process. It takes time to study and learn the word of God so that day by day, year by year our standards that we received are being replaced with God's standards. Now what happens as we approve of His standards is something no one expects. They expect you get constricted and all tight and legalistic. But no, you find that you enjoy the greatest liberty possible in a fallen world. There is balance to the Christian life and it is that balance that you want to find. Now on one side of that balance there is legalism and on the other side there is licentiousness. Both will enslave. Legalism is holding to an overly strict standard that goes beyond the Bible. Don't smoke, don't drink, don't go with the girls that do, that kind of thing that is such a caricature of Christianity that it is an automatic turn off to so many unbelievers. Legalism is not Christianity. On the other hand, there is licentiousness and this is holding to

an overly relaxed standard that also goes beyond the Bible. So here we are sinning but calling it grace and this is why unbelievers refer to Christians as hypocritical. So we have these two extremes that we should avoid. Neither one is freedom, both are slavery. We should strive to find the balance so that we can approve of the standards of God and enjoy the greatest freedom possible. That's true Christianity. But each one, Paul says, must be fully convinced in his own mind.

The standards in this case relate to the observance of certain days and the Jew had it in his mind that he had to observe certain days and the Gentile had it in his mind that he did not have to observe certain days but it applies to any amoral issue in this age. The important principle is that wherever you are on these types of issues you are **fully convinced**. This means you are not to have any doubt in your mind. If you have doubt you should never do it until you figure it out and are **fully convinced**. Half convinced won't do. God doesn't want half-convinced believers running around because half-convinced believers don't know what they are doing.

Now notice in 14:6 why we have to accept Christians with regard to these kinds of things. **He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord**. Why is a Christian keeping Sabbath? **For the Lord**. He set that day apart to worship **the Lord**. Does he have to do that? No, but he has done that. Is there anything wrong with that? There is nothing wrong with that. Now some will come along and say that you must keep the Sabbath, by which they mean Saturday worship. This is the Seventh Day Adventists and many Christians take a less strict stance but still enforce the Sabbath. They claim it is sin if you don't keep Sabbath and some of them say it is Saturday, like the OT and others that it is Sunday. The sin is not refusing to keep Sabbath but saying you must keep Sabbath. That is legalism. It is an overly strict standard that is not biblical. Now the biblical standard is right here; **One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike**. Both are valid positions and people on both sides should be considerate of the other and not try to force them to keep their position. So if you try to make me feel guilty for not keeping Sabbath then you are trying to steal my freedom. Besides, I am not going to feel guilty. In Galatians, Paul says don't let anyone steal your freedom. Why should I let you take my freedom for your scruples? It is not the command of God. If you want to keep it, fine, I accept you as you are, I don't judge you or hold you with contempt, but don't force Sabbath keeping on me.

We can make another example here in verse 6: you see that the man who is observing the day is observing it for the Lord. By parallel, why is a Christian abstaining from drinking alcohol? Maybe because he knows his weakness. Maybe because he knows that if he drinks he will get drunk. He is doing it **for the Lord!** For him abstaining is completely legitimate. I shouldn't pressure him.

Paul says in verse 6, **and he who eats, does so for the Lord**. So the man who eats BLT's **does so for the Lord**. The man who says you must keep Sabbath and eats BLT's is not really considering what these things say. He is a divisive man, divisive over things that ought not be divisive. I say you can keep Sabbath and eat BLT's on the same day or you can do neither or do one and not the other and however you do it, as long as you do it **for the Lord**, it is fine.

Now what Paul states next in verse 6 is the reason why He does it **for the Lord**. He does it for the Lord because **he gives thanks to God**. Aren't you supposed to do everything for the Lord? I like to have a few beers on the weekend. I do that for the Lord. I give thanks to God for the fermentation process of wheat and barley. I do not see how that is a problem. I have worked all week and I am relaxing and enjoying my family and friends. If the Lord Himself could relax why do so many Christians think it's wrong to relax? Oh, I think they relax too, just in their own way. Maybe they take a bath, maybe they go shopping, maybe they take a drive, maybe they go look at art or visit a museum or go to the zoo. I don't know and it doesn't matter either way because all that is fine. God doesn't expect you to be uptight all the time. Relax; eat, don't eat, observe a day, don't observe a day, but whatever you decide **give thanks to God**. That is a cardinal test for whether you are living for Him. Are you giving thanks to Him. Not are you giving thanks for sin. Giving thanks to Him. That is what Paul says, **and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God**. The point is both sides are doing it for **the Lord** because they are giving **thanks to God**. Are you giving thanks to God in all things? Is your life in balance? Are you truly living in freedom? That is where Paul wants you to be.

Verses 7-8 go together, For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. These verses are impressing upon us our accountability to the Lord. We are not accountable to live up to the standards of other believers. We are accountable to live up to the standards of the Lord. We belong to Him. We have been purchased by Him. We do not live for ourselves. We live for Him. Is that your attitude? The one eating is eating for the Lord and the one not eating is not eating for the Lord. Both are for the Lord. The point of Paul saying we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord is that whatever we do we are to do it for Him. Are you doing all things for Him? This is grass roots Christianity. This is so fundamental and such practical living.

In 14:9 the reason we live and die for Him is why? Because He lived and died for God. That is what He did and that is what we should do. **For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living**. In order for Him to be the judge of the living and the dead He had to be qualified by living a life and dying a death that pleased God. That is what He did and that is why the Father says, "All judgment has been given to the Son; the Father judges no one." Did you know that? The Father will never judge one soul. All judgment has been given to the son. It was to this end that HE lived and died.

Now in 14:10 we are asked another question as before in verse 4. Here the question is, **But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt?** This catches both the weak and the strong brother who is looking on the other with an evil attitude. If Jesus Christ lived and died so that He alone is the one who judges and not even the Father judges anyone, **why do you judge your brother?** I do not think you have a clue what you are doing. I see this all the time. Oh, so and so drank a glass of wine. So and so played cards. That is the sin. That is the thing that Paul says you have no right to do. You are not the

judge of the dead or the living on these kinds of things. Sometimes people judge the dead. My goodness, give me a break. Don't you have something better to do? Don't you know that you are the one who is going to be judged for that kind of attitude? That is what Paul says next.

For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. Now **the judgment seat of God** is the same as the **judgment seat of Christ**, which is interesting because by substitution Christ is God. If Christ is not God then there must be two judgment seats; Christ's and God's, but that will never work. Jesus is God. There is one **judgment seat** for believers of this dispensation. The word **judgment seat** is the Greek word *bema*. The *bema* in the ancient world was a raised platform where a judge sat to decide cases, usually in or near the marketplace. Or it was situated in a stadium where the judge of athletic events sat to dispense awards or disqualify participants. Probably the most famous one was at Corinth but they were all over the ancient world. Paul picked up this imagery to describe the kind of judgment the believer would attend and either be rewarded or disqualified from rewards. It is a judgment within the family of God and has that tone. The judgment will occur immediately after the rapture when all church age believers are caught up to Christ in the air and in the twinkling of an eye transformed into their resurrection bodies. The judgment is for what we have done in the body; whether good or bad. The good are things that are done by the Spirit and the things that are bad are things done by the flesh. The things that are done by the Spirit will be rewarded. They are the gold, silver and precious stones. The things that are done in the flesh will be disqualified for reward. They are the wood, hay and stubble. It is important to understand that there will be no penal punishment for the believer but merely his works will be tested to see whether they have the quality of imperishability supplied by the Spirit of God and therefore rewardable or the quality of perishability supplied by the flesh and therefore disqualified for reward. It is more of an evaluation seat and so if the English word judgment has the connotation of judgment for you then just replace it with evaluation because that is truly what it is. What this means is that life is a series of opportunities and you have the opportunity to walk by the Spirit and do good or walk by the flesh and do bad. In the end all of this will be evaluated. With that in mind, don't you know what says Paul about judging others before the time? (also cf 1 Cor 4:1-6) Don't you know it would be a bad idea to judge your brother on these types of scruples because that is Christ's to judge. He is the one who lived and died to acquire the position as judge of all. So then who are you? You will **stand before the judgment seat of God**. You will give an account. You will not have anyone holding your hand. You will face Jesus Christ one on one. That is very sobering reality and I hope it motivates you to think twice before judging someone over some amoral issue. Some of you are legalists and some of you are licentious. You need to find the balance. It is always about balance. Finding on the essentials unity and the non-essentials harmony...

Now in 14:11-12 Paul is just proving this by quoting the OT and then restating it. **For it is written, AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD.** The OT text he quotes is Isa 45:23 and there it refers to the whole world but here he is applying it to believers. We will all be judged/evaluated by God.

As Paul applies in 14:12, **So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.** Again, since all judgment has been handed over to the Son then the Son must be **God**. It is not really a question if Jesus is God. Only the cults question that. That is why they are cults. It is all over the Bible. They do not believe the Bible. They only give lip service to the Bible. They only use the Bible as a platform for their agenda. Satan is alive and active. The long and the short of it today is that let God be God on these types of issues. Don't try to take on the role of Jesus Christ. He is the judge on our fellow Christian's heart attitude on these thing, not you, not me. We did not live and die to inherit the position of judge over all, but He did, so let Him be Him and you be you. And then Paul goes on to more. There's still more and again, soak in this, think this through because there are a lot of issues here and they are so practical and important.