

Fully Convinced

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- [0 : 0 0] If you guys brought your Bibles with you, I'd like you to open up to the book of Romans. Romans chapter 14. We're going to jump back into this chapter this morning at verse 5. Romans chapter 14. We're going to begin here in verse 5.
- If you're using one of the Bibles that we have scattered around in the chairs for you, you just have to turn to page 948. Otherwise, you've got to find the book of Romans, which is in the New Testament. The Bible is divided into the Old and New Testament.
- The Old Testament makes up the first two thirds. The New Testament is the last third. So get in that last third of your Bible and find Romans and get to chapter 14, where we're going to be this morning. I want to ask you guys to stand in honor of God's Word together.
- We're going to begin in verse 5 and read down through verse 9 this morning. The Apostle Paul writes, One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike.
- [1 : 0 9] Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. The one who observes the day observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God.
- While the one who abstains abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. For none of us lives to himself and none of us dies to himself. For 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. For to this end, Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.
- Thank you, Father, for this word. You may be seated. Last week we began chapter 14. And we saw that in this chapter, Paul is giving us some very practical application of the command to love one another that we find in Romans chapter 13.
- We said that that command to love one another is sort of the high point of these chapters. Chapters 12 through 15. The command to love one another is the peak. It's the high point.
- [2 : 1 9] And so chapters 14 and 15 are an application of that command. Love one another into a very specific situation that we are going to find is very, very common among us within the church.
- That is, how do we react to one another? How do we treat each other? How do we speak to one another? How do we live as the family of God and as the body of Christ when we have real disagreements among us?
- Particularly in the cases discussed here in Romans chapter 14 and 15 when we have disagreements about how to live the Christian life. about what sorts of things are acceptable and what sorts of things are not acceptable among us.
- And we saw last week that there are three particular issues that Paul mentions in these chapters. He mentions the issue of whether or not we can eat meat, whether or not we can drink wine, and whether or not we have to observe certain days and recognize particular days out of all of the other days.

And I said to you last week that I believe that all of these issues are issues tied to the divide between Gentile believers and Jewish believers in the church at Rome because the issue of eating meat or not eating meat is not a matter here in this context of whether or not you want to be a vegetarian or not be a vegetarian.

[3 : 43] The issue here is whether or not the food that they're going to consume can be considered clean. Whether or not by the Jewish rituals and the Jewish laws and procedures, the food available in Rome can be truly called clean or not.

And for whatever reason, we mentioned a few possible reasons, but for whatever reason, many of the Jewish Christians there in Rome had decided that the meat that was available to them fell into the category of unclean and therefore they were not willing to eat it.

Whereas the Gentile believers there did not feel themselves to be bound by the rules of clean and unclean food. And so they were free to eat meat. And for whatever reason, the wine also fell into that category of unclean.

But the Gentile believers felt that it was perfectly fine to participate in the drinking of the wine that was available to them. And so you had this real substantive divide there within the church over what they could not eat and drink and what was permissible for them to eat and drink.

But it really boils down to a much more central question and that is, do the laws in the Old Testament that detail which foods are allowable and permissible, which are clean and unclean, do those laws continue to apply now that we are living in the New Covenant age, now that we are living in the time after the Christ has come, do those laws remain in effect in any sense whatsoever.

[5 : 13] Now, of course, these Jewish believers in Rome were not insisting that you had to obey these laws in order to get right with God, in order to be saved.

If they were saying that, Paul would not have dealt with them as brothers in Christ the way that he does here. He would have dealt with them the way that he does in the book of Galatians and that's entirely different. So they weren't insisting that these laws be followed in order for a person to get right with God, but what they were saying was that once we are saved, once we belong to Christ, if we are among the people of God, then a part of the rules that should govern our lives are the rules in the Old Testament about foods that are clean and unclean.

And then, of course, in addition to that, there would have been all sorts of other laws that these Jewish Christians would have said. It is good and right, and some would have said even necessary, that in order to fully honor the Lord, we must live in accordance with these rules and regulations and laws.

And what we saw Paul say was that, no, those laws are not in effect. He says that all things are clean. In other words, he is immediately identifying with the position that does not adhere to these rules and regulations.

He is taking a stance on the matter. He does draw a line, but he says that we should be patient and loving and kind toward those who disagree with us on those things.

[6 : 40] He puts them in the two categories of the strong and the weak, as we saw last week. The strong being those who recognize and live according to the freedom that they have from those regulations in Christ.

The weak being those who continue to place themselves under those regulations and believe that they ought to live by those rules and regulations. And Paul says that the strong ought to welcome the weak.

They ought to welcome them and not for the purpose of merely arguing and debating the issue, but they ought to genuinely welcome them as believers in Christ. And so there ought to be pervading in the midst of us in the church a desire to have fellowship and unity with those, even those with whom we disagree about certain kinds of issues.

patience and forbearance and kindness and a willingness to accept that we are not all going to agree all the time on all things. It's simply not going to happen.

And we can't really have any sense of unity within the church and we can't move forward in the church if we insist that all the time we always agree on things because there are always going to be among us those who are more mature in the faith and those who are more immature in the faith, the strong and the weak, they are always, always going to be among us.

[8 : 01] And if we don't know how to live with people who disagree with us, we are not going to bring God the honor and glory that He deserves as the body of Christ. So Paul encourages patience.

He encourages us to bear with one another. He encourages us to allow others to have the room to do things differently than we do them and to have opinions that are different from ours at times.

But that does not mean that we should not ever take a stand. It does not mean that we should not be firm in our convictions.

I want you to take a look here at the verses that we're going to cover this morning. Verse 5 brings in the other issue besides food and drink, one that we're going to talk about a little bit more here in just a moment.

Verse 5 brings in the issue of the recognition of certain days marked on the Jewish calendar. One person esteems one day as better than the other while another esteems all days alike.

[8 : 59] Now here's what I want you to pay attention to right now. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. In other words, Paul says each one of us has a responsibility to engage our minds so that we can come to firm, solid convictions and conclusions on the issues that we're going to face within the body of Christ.

Whether those are theological issues or whether those are moral issues pertaining to the ways in which we live out our Christian life, we should be fully convinced in our own minds.

We need to have convictions. Being patient with other people, bearing with one another, being willing to allow room within the body of Christ for disagreement on certain issues is not the same as lacking conviction yourself.

You should have convictions, strong convictions about what the Bible has to say on theological and ethical matters. But not all of those convictions are going to require from us the same sort of reaction to those who disagree with our convictions.

Let's think about theological matters which are not at the center here although they certainly lie behind the ethical issues here in these chapters. But let's think about some theological issues where we're going to react differently to those who disagree with us.

[10 : 28] There are some theological issues that are so important, so central to the Christian faith that if a person denies those or disagrees with those issues, with what the Bible says about those issues, we would be right in saying you do not belong to Christ.

You are not indeed a brother or a sister in Christ. You are not a part of the body of Christ. So we think about issues related closely to the gospel itself. If a person believes that they can earn a right standing before God by performing certain things, whether those things be in obedience to the Old Testament laws or some other moral code, but if a person believes that they can earn God's approval, that they can be justified by their own works, we would say that is in opposition to the basic gospel message of the Bible and that person is outside of the faith.

That is, they do not meet the most basic definition of what a true follower of Christ is and that would be to begin with someone who affirms and believes in the gospel of Jesus Christ, which centrally means that we are justified by faith alone.

So there are going to be some issues about which we draw a line and we say if you are on that side of the line, you do not belong to Christ. There are going to be theological issues that take that shape.

But then there are going to be other theological issues that fall on the side of the line that says you can be a person within the body of Christ and yet hold view A or view B.

[12 : 06] And those kinds of issues are going to fall into two categories themselves. There will be some about which you say you need to get this right.

You do not need to be wrong on this issue. This is a very important issue. Is it possible to misunderstand this issue? Is it possible at least for a time to be convinced of a view that is unbiblical and yet remain a believer?

Yes. We might think of some of those issues. I could think of some very, very significant and important issues pertaining to the theology that we hold that nevertheless do not immediately say this person is not a Christian.

So for instance, consider the issue of the virgin birth of Jesus. We would say that that is a crucial belief. But is it possible for someone who genuinely knows Christ, loves Christ, is attempting to walk with Christ, to be convinced for a time because maybe they're reading some bad theology books.

Maybe they're sitting under bad preaching. To be convinced for a time that perhaps it didn't really happen in that sort of way. Is it possible?

[13 : 20] Yes. So long as they continue to hold to the most essential things about the person of Christ. That he is fully man. That he is fully God. So long as they continue to hold to the doctrine of the Trinity and all those essential beliefs.

But we would not say, well it doesn't really matter what you believe about that. We wouldn't say that. We would say the Bible clearly tells us in the Gospels that Christ was born of a virgin.

We would want to take a firm, hard stance upon that within the church. But that doesn't mean that we're automatically going to conclude that everyone who has doubts about that is not a Christian.

So there are going to be theological issues that we say are very important. And in fact we might be willing to say and I probably would say if a person remains incorrect on those for a long period of time and never falls under the conviction of the Spirit and is never corrected by the Word they probably aren't a follower of Christ.

But could they be for a time confused about that or deceived by someone about issues like that? Sure they could. And there are a number of issues that are going to fall into that category.

[14 : 26] It's a category where we should not just stand by and tolerate false teaching in that area but we do not automatically say you can't possibly be a Christian.

You just cannot be. So we have those doctrines that are essential that to deny those doctrines places you outside of the body of Christ. We have those doctrines that are extremely important and yet you can be deceived about them for a time while still remaining in Christ.

And then there are going to be a lot of doctrinal issues about which we might say the Bible has something to say about that. And we might even be convinced that the Bible is clear about that particular doctrinal issue.

But it does not affect one's fellowship within the body of Christ in any meaningful sense. And what I mean by that is that there are going to be lots of issues, lots of disagreements on theological issues where we do not assess a person's being in Christ nor do we think that if they don't soon correct themselves on that they cannot possibly be in Christ.

So that there are fellow believers in many churches who do not believe the way that we believe about baptism, for instance. We are a Baptist church.

[15 : 46] Therefore we believe and are convinced that the Bible is clear that baptism should be of believers only. We believe that. We hold to that. But some of the theologians that I most admire, some whose books I read most frequently, do not agree with that.

Do I immediately begin to question their faith? Of course not. Do I immediately say I'm never going to read their books, I'm never going to listen to them, I'm not going to have anything to do with them at all? Of course not. We recognize that there are within the realm of theology there are matters of essential importance, there are matters that are not essential but highly important, there are matters beneath that that are not essential and of less importance, but yet we believe the Bible is clear on them and we ought to be able to state our opinion and know our opinion.

We ought to be fully convinced in our own minds of what the Bible has to say on those issues. And the more that you grow in your faith, the more that you grow in your understanding and your knowledge of the Word, the more fully convinced you will be on a range of theological issues.

But of course, Paul's not dealing directly, although he is dealing indirectly as we will see, he's not dealing directly with theological issues, he's dealing with ethical issues in these chapters.

He's dealing primarily with issues of what does the Christian life look like when it's practically lived out. And even within those ethical issues, we're going to have some that fall into a couple of categories.

[17 : 19] Similar to our categories, to our theological categories. There are going to be some issues that we're going to want to say the Bible is absolutely clear on these.

It's absolutely clear on these. And though we want to be patient with people and we want to teach people, we do not want to give one inch of ground on certain ethical issues.

We cannot give any ground. And that's not what Paul is calling for in these chapters. Paul is not calling for us to waffle on clear ethical issues within the Bible.

So, for instance, he is not calling for us to have a wishy-washy attitude toward the issue of abortion. We know what it is. We know what happens. We know that it's murder.

We know that it's the taking of an innocent life. And so, we shouldn't waffle on that. We shouldn't take a step back and say, well, you know, some people disagree so we probably don't want to push those buttons and we probably don't want to say anything when it comes to those issues.

[18 : 22] We shouldn't do that. Yes, we speak in love. We speak in kindness. We don't yell at people. We don't just drive people away who disagree with us on those things because after all, we want to win them over and persuade them as to what the Bible has to say about that.

So, we're not mean and ugly and rude about those kinds of things, but we're going to be fully, fully convinced in our own mind and we're not going to budge. We're not going to move on that.

There are going to be a number of ethical issues that fall into that particular category. But then there are going to be a number of ethical issues that fall into the kind of category that I believe Paul is dealing with in these chapters.

And these are issues that while we may believe the Bible is clear on them, we also recognize that it is perhaps not as clear on these issues as it is on these others.

Or that it is much easier to be confused about these issues than perhaps it is about some other issues. And when it comes to those things, we follow, we follow the orders of Paul in these chapters.

[19 : 30] We do not welcome them simply for the sake of arguing and trying to prove our own points. We bear with them. We go so far as to make sure that we're not doing anything as we interact with them that would violate their own conscience about these things.

There are a lot of issues that fall within that range, but Paul deals with one in particular in here that I think still has relevance for us today. And it helps us to see behind the ethical issue to the theological issues that ultimately do lie at the heart of the divisions here between the Gentile believers and the Jewish believers.

And that's the issue that we see raised in verse 5. One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. What does he mean here?

What is he talking about here? Well, broadly we could say that he's obviously dealing with the various holidays and feasts and festivals and days marked out on the Jewish calendar for special observance.

And there are a number of those. Some of those are mentioned in the Old Testament. Some of those developed as simply a part of the Jewish religion as a part of Judaism and were added on top of those.

[20 : 47] But there are a number of those. And so we can say at the start that Paul certainly has that in mind. Paul certainly is thinking broadly of all of those things.

But I think we can probably be more specific than that. And there are a few reasons that we can be more specific. One is the way that Paul words things here in this verse. He says, one person esteems one day or a particular day as better than another day.

And it's important to recognize that there is a particular day being marked out on a regular basis as more important than all of the other days. While others, he says, esteem all days alike.

They treat them all the same. So I think that probably what Paul has in mind primarily in this verse is the issue of the Sabbath day. Which continues to have ethical significance for us today because there continue to be, even this day, there continue to be disagreements among followers of Christ about whether or not the Sabbath command is still in effect.

Whether or not we are still under the Sabbath law. Now, Paul's approach to this issue is not precisely the same as his approach to the issue of clean and unclean.

[22 : 10] Ultimately, the same reason for Paul to say we are free from the Sabbath is the same reason that we are free from the food laws. But in reference to the food laws, it's very easy for us and for the believers of Paul's day to see clear reasons why we are not under those laws.

There is, for instance, Mark's comment in the Gospel of Mark that Jesus declared all foods to be clean. That's very, very clear. Or how about in the book of Acts where Peter has a dream and Peter is told in that dream that all foods are now clean.

You can eat pork, you can eat the things that the Gentiles eat and in fact he's commanded to go and eat those things. He doesn't like that command initially. He doesn't fully understand it.

But nevertheless, we have clear passages, statements in the New Testament both coming from the ministry of Jesus and from the very earliest days of the apostles and of the church that all food laws are now null and void.

We know that. That's easy to establish. But it's not quite as simple when it comes to the issue of the Sabbath. One of the reasons it's not quite as simple is because in all of Jesus' dealings with the Sabbath in terms of His interactions and the things that He did on the Sabbath, most of the time when Jesus is accused of violating the Sabbath, He's really entering into a discussion with the Pharisees about the addition of all these rules and regulations that they had added by way of their tradition on top of the Sabbath.

[23 : 43] So that you don't see Jesus actually violating the Sabbath at any particular time in His ministry, really and truly violating the Sabbath law. Every time Jesus is able to cite Old Testament precedents to prove that He has not in fact violated the Sabbath law when He's accused of it.

So there's not an instance like there is with the issue of foods. There's not an instance in which Jesus declares the Sabbath to no longer be binding upon believers. So that as we approach this particular issue of asking the question is the Sabbath still binding today for New Covenant believers, we have to start by acknowledging that it's not as clear cut as the issue of whether or not we have to follow the Jewish dietary laws found in the Old Testament.

But saying that it's not as clear is not the same as saying that the Bible doesn't tell us and doesn't reveal to us what our attitude should be toward the Sabbath.

Because as I said the same basic issue for Paul lies behind his rejection of the Jewish food laws and his rejection of the continuing validity of the Sabbath for followers of Jesus.

And that issue has to do with Paul's whole attitude toward the Mosaic law. Now I cannot in the time that we have this morning I cannot repeat to you everything that we have learned about Paul's attitude toward the law so far in the book of Romans.

[25 : 16] That's a sermon unto itself. A sermon that I already preached. Alright? You can go back in the archives on our website you can look it up and it's cleverly titled get this The Law in Romans.

Okay? When we came to the end of chapter 7 I preached a sermon in which I summarize all the main points that Paul makes about the Mosaic law the law of the Old Testament in the book of Romans.

And so I would encourage you this week take some time out of one of your days go back find that sermon and listen to it and be reminded of all the things that we've seen throughout the book of Romans when it comes to understanding and wrestling with our relationship as followers of Christ to the law of Moses.

How should we interact with that? And I had 14 points in that sermon outlining as simply as I could all the main statements that Paul has to make about the law.

What it is how we should regard it and how we should live in relationship to it. Everything that we ought to think about the law as revealed in Romans.

[26 : 23] I don't have time to do that again this morning but I do want to say a few brief things about how we should think about the law in light of what Paul and the rest of the New Testament teaches us about the law.

Now the most common way to think about the law and to try to understand and wrestle with which laws of the Old Testament still apply to us and which laws do not the most common way to think about that is to divide the law into three parts into three categories and those categories are the civil law the ceremonial law and the moral law.

You'll find this in a lot of books and a number I've used these categories because these are helpful because in fact there are so many laws in the Torah that in order for you just to sort of wrap your head around all of them you need to sort of categorize them and so you have a number of laws that pertain to dietary restrictions or that pertain to the sacrificial rituals in the entire temple system of Jerusalem and all of those laws we usually summarize and call those well those are the ceremonial laws they're ceremonial they have to do with being clean and unclean as you come into the temple they have to do with what kinds of sacrifices you should offer and how they should be offered and who can offer those sacrifices so we call those the ceremonial laws and then we have the civil law which for the most part deals with how do you penalize those who break the other laws ceremonial and moral laws so what do you do with a person who for instance murders his neighbor well the civil law says capital punishment you put them to death what do you do with someone who steals something from his neighbor the civil law outlines in fact multiple responses to that depending on what was stolen and how it was stolen

I mean the civil law of the Old Testament really tells the people of Israel how can we go about holding one another accountable as a nation for our adherence to the rest of the laws that's what the civil law covers and then you have the category of the moral law being those basic laws and principles that are universal they are not particular to the people of Israel they don't pertain to merely the issues at the temple they don't pertain to merely how the government of Israel should punish people who break the law they are universal laws like you shall not murder you shall not steal these moral laws apply to everyone in all nations at all times do they not?

we want every nation to have rules and laws against murder don't we? of course we do we want there to be some sort of protections against people stealing our things and so we have laws to protect us from those because we all recognize whatever our background that you shouldn't take things that don't belong to you and that if someone takes something of yours something should be done about it and so those universal principles those universal rules and regulations are categorized as the moral law and so it is very helpful when you're dealing with trying to understand the Old Testament law trying to just wrap your mind around all the things contained in the law it is very helpful to use these particular categories it is but they can also hinder us from fully understanding how we should how we should interact with the law they can hinder us in one way because it's not always clear into which category a particular commandment belongs it's not always clear it's not always certain some laws are clearly ceremonial laws and yet they are we want to put them in the category of the civil law because there are punishments that accompany the breaking of those laws there are some laws that are clearly moral laws but the ways in which they are stated in the Old Testament make them so specific and precise that we want to somehow limit their application either to the ancient world or to the people of Israel because they don't carry over directly into every culture and every time period but when you read them they sort of feel like they belong into the category of moral law but you can't just immediately import it over you can immediately import you shall not murder right how do you immediately import you shall not covet and then there's a list your neighbor's wife that's fine okay your neighbor's house that's good your neighbor's female slaves male slaves their oxen their donkeys like how do you how do you immediately import that into a universal principle you don't without changing it without limiting it in some way and so we usually quote that commandment we usually say the tenth commandment is you shall not covet because that's a good universal principle that falls neatly into the category of moral law yet it's stated in such a way in the actual listing of the ten commandments that it's very specific in some ways to the people of Israel so that these categories while they are helpful they don't solve every issue because it's not always clear what category a particular command belongs to now the way in which most theologians simplify matters is they simply say well the moral law is embodied in the ten commandments everything else is civil and ceremonial but as we've seen even some of the ten commandments contain material that can't be easily universalized like the command to covet and then right there in the midst of the ten commandments is this one commandment that the early church and the 21st century church continues to wrestle with what do we do with it the command to keep the sabbath if you adopt the view that well the ten commandments are the moral law then automatically the sabbath is binding upon everybody because the moral law is universal in its application but if you approach the ten commandments by saying some of them are clear general principles but we can't just automatically say oh here's the moral law if you interpret the ten commandments carefully then you're left with the question of what do we do with this commandment because it feels and sounds like ceremonial law it's the marking of a particular day and many of the ceremonial laws

[33 : 03] have to do with the marking of particular days for Jewish festivals so it looks and sounds and feels like ceremonial law but it's in the middle of the ten commandments and so there's a tendency to shunt it into the category of moral law and say that it continues to apply universally so we are immediately confronted when we begin to think about the sabbath we are immediately confronted with the issue of how do we think about the law because not everything that is helpful for teaching is helpful in our ultimate application of things the threefold division of the law is helpful for trying to think about what sorts of things are contained in the law but it is not helpful for helping us to figure out which parts of the law continue to apply to us still today and one of the reasons that I say that is because when we actually return to the New Testament and when we get specifically to the book of Romans what we find is that

Paul himself does not divide up the law like that he doesn't do that he never uses these categories of ceremonial civil and moral law he simply doesn't do that he holds all of the law together and he says we're no longer under the law that's not how we usually think that's not how we usually approach the issue but that's how Paul approaches it in fact I would like you to turn back to Romans chapter 7 I do want you to see this rather than just to hear me say it in Romans chapter 7 which is one of the most crucial if not the most crucial chapter in the book of Romans for understanding Paul's approach to the law he confronts head on this issue of is the law still binding and he means that law in the totality all of the Old Testament law all the Mosaic law is it still binding upon believers and he begins with an analogy in verse 1 of marriage and he says that as long as someone is married they're bound to that person they are bound but if their spouse dies then they are no longer bound to them they are in a sense set free from their commitment to uphold their covenant obligations within the marriage because that person is no longer around and Paul says that our relationship to the law is analogous to that before coming to Christ we were bound to the law the way a wife is bound to her husband we were bound to it we were under its authority but he says once you come to Christ you have died to the law that relationship has been severed much like death severs the marriage covenant take a look at verse 4 likewise so there we go there's the comparison likewise my brothers you also have died to the law through the body of Christ so that you may belong to another to him who has been raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God so this dying to the law does not result in immorality that's not the point it results in fruit for God and practically lived out righteousness but not by means of checking off laws

I did this I did that followed this one that's not how it works anymore verse 5 for while we were living in the flesh our sinful passions aroused by the law that's what the law did it aroused them we're at work in our members to bear fruit for death but now he says we are released from the law we are released from it notice not the ceremonial law not the civic law just the law in reference to the entire law of Moses so Paul's thinking on these issues is that we are no longer as believers in totality bound by the mosaic law we are free from it we have died to it that of course does not mean that we have no moral guidelines anymore it doesn't mean that we can live any way that we want because elsewhere Paul says there's a new kind of law over us it's the law of Christ we are now no longer under the law of Moses we are now under the law of Christ which Paul calls the law of love turn over to Galatians so I can help you to see this connection here because this is so important as we decide so many issues that are going to confront us our tendency is to want to immediately quote the law sometimes and we don't find

Paul doing that Galatians chapter 5 Paul says in verse 14 the whole law is fulfilled in one word you shall love your neighbor as yourself that should sound very familiar Romans 13 ok the whole law is fulfilled by loving one another in Romans 13 here Galatians chapter 5 the whole law is fulfilled by this one command you love your neighbor as yourself now move down to chapter 6 verse 2 where we see something similar bear one another's burdens all right bear one another's burdens it's a practical application of loving your neighbor bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ so the law of love is the law of Christ and as followers of Christ we are no longer under the law of Moses we are now under the law of Christ which is the law of love so no longer are we seeking to render obedience to individual specific commands on a regular basis our goal is to love others to imitate Christ in the way that he treated others to be like Jesus in the ways in which we interact with other people and Paul says when we do that we automatically fulfill the law he's very specific in Romans 13 about how we fulfill the law by loving others he says the commandments you shall not commit adultery you shall not murder you shall not steal you shall not covet and any other commandment are summed up in this word you shall love your neighbor as yourself so now we've arrived at a point to where all of those commandments that I said earlier were clearly universal commandments and if we were using the threefold division we would definitely want to put those in the category of moral law right we all want universal principles we like the threefold division of the law because it gives us the moral law but we have trouble defining that sometimes and we have to wrestle with the fact that Paul says we're not under the law in its totality but now here we have those sorts of commandments found within the ten commandments that are clearly universal principles and we have Paul saying all of those are fulfilled if you obey the law of love the law of Christ if you love your neighbor as yourself all those are automatically fulfilled so that we are no longer in any practical sense obligated to render obedience to the law of Moses and yet when we love one another as Christ loved we automatically render obedience to those parts of the law that we have a natural tendency and inclination to want to cling to and hang on to and say these remain in effect we don't need them to remain in effect we don't need the mosaic law to remain over us if we are in

Christ and if the Holy Spirit dwells within us and if we are pursuing conformity to Christ all those parts of the law that we wanted so desperately to cling to we find that they are automatically fulfilled in us now that takes us back to the issue of the Sabbath alright back in Romans chapter 14 we cannot enforce or enjoin the Sabbath upon ourselves or anyone else on the basis that the Sabbath is a part of the Ten Commandments and therefore a part of the moral law if everything else that we've said is true we cannot do that and in fact Paul does not do that he says specifically some of you are going to recognize one day above another others of you are not going to recognize one day above another and that's okay that is perfectly fine in Paul's mind now if you if you have some doubts as to whether or not

[41 : 47] Paul does have in mind the Sabbath here if you're looking for something more concrete if you want a good go to verse then I can give you one this morning but I prefer that we that we build our understanding of these things on our understanding of our relationship to the entire law rather than just a good proof text but I can give you one this morning turn over to Colossians if you want to otherwise it will be up on the screen in Colossians chapter 2 verse 16 Paul says let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink okay that's exactly what we're talking about in Romans 14 is it not let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food or drink or here's the other thing with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath don't let anyone pass judgment upon you and here in Colossians he's writing primarily to Gentile believers you're not bound by the law

Gentiles you don't have to obey it you don't have to do these things and don't let anybody else pass judgment upon you because you don't follow the food laws don't let anyone pass judgment on you because you don't observe the Sabbath and the other days marked on the Jewish calendar don't let that happen don't let that be the case you are free from those things and now the application of that principle and Paul's overall attitude toward the law comes in Romans chapter 14 when we have to interact with those who disagree with us on the issue of the Sabbath what do we do now what you're going to find practically is that even among those who believe that the Sabbath commandment is still binding there's going to be a lot of variety so there are some groups who take the Sabbath very very literally and insist that every Saturday should be observed as a Sabbath because of course originally the Sabbath is Saturday I mean the word means the seventh the seventh day of the week Saturday the last day is what was set aside in the

Ten Commandments as a day of rest and so you will have some groups who say Saturday is still the Sabbath it's still in effect so for instance you have it's not difficult to figure out Seventh Day Adventists right they're called Seventh Day Adventists because they worship on Saturday and they hold that Saturday is still very literally a Sabbath day of rest more commonly you're going to find believers who understand Sunday to now be a Christian Sabbath that's the view that you will find to be much more common but even among those who hold to that there will be varying interpretations of what it means what it means to rest what it means to actually observe Sabbath on a Sunday so you will find some people who insist that nothing but rest and worship and prayer can be done on a Sunday so they would not ever dare on a Sunday to go outside and mow the yard that's work and they will not do it and some go so far as to say we ought not to be engaged in any form of entertainment on the Sabbath no it's just for worship and prayer and devotion and rest so they wouldn't even dare go outside and toss the football around or they wouldn't dare sit for a couple of hours and watch a football game because that would be a form of entertainment on the Sabbath so you're going to have all this variety of application of the

Sabbath in the modern world and yet the Apostle Paul holds that we are not bound by the Sabbath law anymore we are not so how do we interact with those who disagree with us in fact I'm well aware that there are probably some of you sitting here this morning thinking I hear what you're saying but I'm still not buying it okay so how do I interact with you and how do you interact with me what do we do when we have a different view of issues like this how do we approach these kinds of things how do we treat one another how do we interact with one another well there are some basic tests that we need to put into place that should determine our attitude toward our behavior as well as toward the behavior of others take a look down here in the passage verse 6 the one who observes the day observes it in honor of the Lord the one who eats eats in honor of the Lord since he gives thanks to God while the one who abstains abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to

God so the task that we should apply both to ourselves and we should want to apply to others in trying to determine how we should think about their behavior and their way of life is are they engaged in this behavior or abstaining from this behavior for God's honor and glory is that what lies at the heart of it are they trying to honor God because if I'm interacting with a fellow believer and they believe that you cannot do any sort of work or entertainment on a Sunday morning I'm going to be tempted to look at them and go you legalist what's wrong with you I want to go out to dinner go out to dinner with me and they're saying no no we don't do that sort of thing on Sunday it's a Sabbath for us we're just going to rest and I'm going to be very tempted to be disgusted with them or irritated with them or at the very least to just think you don't know what you're doing you're being legalistic and yet what I ought to do rather than do that is to simply rejoice in the fact that they are seeking to honor and glorify

[47 : 45] God on Sunday that's what I should be focused upon yes I disagree with their continuing adherence to the Sabbath law yes I disagree with that but they're adhering to it for the honor and glory of God and therefore I should rejoice in the fact that they're trying to honor and glorify God rather than get frustrated with them and rather than accuse them of being bound up into legalism that's how I should approach them and then if you find yourself on the other side of the fence the advice that Paul gave to us that we saw last week still holds do not judge do not immediately fall into a critical judgmental state of mind if you believe that the Sabbath command is binding and every Sunday ought to be recognized as a full day of rest with no other activity if you are convinced of that particular view do not be judgmental of your brothers and sisters in Christ who feel the freedom to go home and turn on the television do not be judgmental of them now you think that's that's going to be very difficult because I think they're doing

I think that they're doing something wrong now we come back to where we've begun each of you should be fully convinced in his own mind that means that that we must in our own minds be assured as assured as we can be of our convictions and that's going to require us to go back at times and re-examine our own convictions in the light of scripture and humbly ask the question am I wrong on the issue and on the other side if you come to the conclusion I am not wrong on the issue it's going to require you to patiently and lovingly be willing to teach those who you think are wrong on the issue not to argue and debate with them about opinions but to patiently teach them that's what Paul is modeling for us in these chapters Paul does not refuse to give his opinion we have seen his opinion his opinion is spelled out clearly on the issue of food laws and

Sabbath and other days he spells it out clearly here and in other places he doesn't shy from saying this is what the truth is so he's willing to teach he's willing to disciple he's willing to engage with those who disagree with him for the advancement of their knowledge and understanding and we should be willing to do that as well sometimes that will mean because you do not feel capable or able to teach sometimes that means rather than judging those who disagree with you you pray that God would through qualified knowledgeable teachers of the Bible that God over time would convict them and bring them to a clearer understanding of the truth but you're praying for them rather than judging them this this is what life looks like within the body of Christ when we are practically applying the command to love one another in the midst of our disagreements because ultimately this church and every true church belongs to

Christ it's the body of Christ for a reason and all of its individual members belong to him and are accountable to him and his honor and his glory ought to be our goal in everything that we do that is after all essentially how Paul wraps up this paragraph take a look down in verse 7 it begins with the word for alright he has just said we shouldn't be judgmental of people we shouldn't look down upon them so long as what they're doing is for the honor of God they're honoring him and they're abstaining from eating food they're honoring him and they're observance of certain days or they're honoring him and not doing those things that's what matters now the next verse begins with 4 because this is why we should take that attitude this is why we should take that mindset and that approach to how we think about and interact with those with whom we disagree because for none of us that is none of us within the body of Christ none of us lives to himself and none of us dies to himself for if we live we live to the

Lord and if we die we die to the Lord now how much more should we be able to say if we celebrate our freedom we do it to the Lord and if we abstain from that we do it to the Lord how much more should we be able to say that if Paul is able to say ultimately our lives and our deaths are for him so then whether we live or whether we die we are the Lord's we belong to him if you are a believer you belong to him he owns you if you look to your right or left and you see someone that you know is a believer understand and think in your mind they belong to Christ for to this end this is why Christ died and lived again that he might be both Lord of the dead and of the living Christ is master of those with whom you disagree in the body of

[53 : 19] Christ he is the Lord of those who approach the Christian life in ways that differ from yours and if that is true then that means we are all united under the same head under the same Lord and part of the same body and the only way that we are ever going to be able to operate effectively as the body of Christ is if we love one another refusing to judge always being patient and bearing with one another that we are firm and sure of what we believe let's pray