

Being Right and Being Right

Thomas Robinson, *Life Renewing* 6, November 5, 2017

Romans 14:7-16

⁵ One person **judges one day as above another**, while another **judges every day the same**. Each should be **fully convinced in their own mind**. ⁶ The one who **thinks** about the day, **thinks in relation to the Lord**. The one who eats, eats in relation to the **Lord** by giving **thanks to God**, and the one not eating, it's in relation to the Lord that they refuse to eat, also giving **thanks to God**.

⁷ For **none of us lives** in relation to self alone, and **none dies** in relation to self alone. ⁸ For if we live, **we live in relation to the Lord**, and if we die, **we die in relation to the Lord**. If we live, therefore, or if we die, **we belong to the Lord**. ⁹ For with this very aim, **Christ died and lived again**, in order that for both **dead and living**, he might **be the Lord**.

¹⁰ You, why do you **pass judgment** on your brother or sister?

Or you, why do you **despise** your brother or sister?

For we will all present ourselves before **God's tribunal**; ¹¹ for it is written, "*As I live, says the LORD, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall acknowledge God.*" [Isa 45:23; Phi 2:10-11]

¹² That means that each of us will give an account of ourselves to God.

¹³ Therefore let's no longer pass judgment on each other, but rather make this judgment: not to put a **stumbling block** or **trap** in the way of a brother or sister.

¹⁴ **I know and I'm persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself**, except that to one who considers something unclean, to that person it's unclean. ¹⁵ For if because of food your brother or sister is brought to grief, you are no longer **walking by the standard of love (agapé)**. Do not by your food **destroy one for whom Christ died**. ¹⁶ So don't cause something that is good in your lives to be reviled.

Romans 12:2

² Don't let yourselves be shaped by this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind, in order that you may discern what is God's intention – which is for what is good and pleasing and mature.

2 Corinthians 5:10

¹⁰ For we must all appear before Christ's tribunal, so that each may receive what is due for what we've done in the body, whether good or evil.

Romans 8:1-4

¹ Now, however, nothing can bring condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus! ² For now the law, under the power of the Spirit who gives life in Christ Jesus, has itself set you free from that same law wielded by sin to bring death. ³ For God has done what was impossible for the law on its own to do, because it was weakened by the flesh. By sending his own Son in flesh like our sin-enslaved flesh and to deal with sin, God condemned sin itself in that very flesh. ⁴ God's purpose was that his faithful righteousness promised by giving the law might come to its full reality in us, who walk a path not determined by the flesh but empowered by the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 8:8-13

⁸ Food won't bring us close to God. We're no worse off if we don't eat, and no better off if we do. ⁹ But watch out that this authority that you have doesn't somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.

¹⁰ For if someone sees you who possess knowledge at banquet in an idol's temple, if they are weak, won't their conscious be built up to eat things sacrifices to idols? ¹¹ And so the one who is weak is destroyed by your very knowledge, the brother or sister for whom Christ died. ¹² But by sinning in this way against these brothers or sisters and striking a blow at their conscience when it is weak, you are sinning against Christ. ¹³ Therefore, if food is a trap that makes my brother or sister fall, I'll certainly never eat meat, in order that I not cause them to fall.

Acts 10:14-15

¹⁴ But Peter said, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean."

¹⁵ And the voice came to him again a second time, "What God has made clean, do not call common."

Romans 5:6, 8

⁵ For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for us ungodly. ... ⁸ God demonstrates his own love toward us in that while we were sinners, Christ died for us.

Jesus as Lord and the Love that Shapes Life (7-9)

Paul wants the Romans to see the nature of a community that includes people not only diverse in background but in spiritual growth and understanding. He's used issues of food and of special days, both with long histories and deep emotions, to highlight fundamentals.

Everything flows from the heart of the Gospel: Jesus' life, death, resurrection that puts him at the heart of human existence as Lord – the Lord who conquers death and creates life.

Jesus' cross opens a relationship deeper and more defining than any human structure.

Human power stratifications are rendered obsolete by the one relationship of every person in life and death to Jesus/God as loving and saving Lord. That new, direct tie has deep power to shape life because it embodies God's love for us in our weakness and hostility.

Each individual has a distinct relation to Christ, as a loved creature for whom Christ died. Each is called into "a walk" according to that Love seen in Jesus, empowered by God's Spirit.

The Individual before God and in Community (10-13)

People with diverse stories and views often have problems with each other, judge each other.

Now each is learning to see themselves relation to a loving God known in Jesus. Each life will ultimately be judged by one Lord, God, Christ, not by each other. Each is a learner of Love.

The diverse community is especially important because it's the place where we practice toward others God's love for ourselves. God loved us hostile sinners and gave us his own life – the story throughout Romans. God's judgment evaluates us by how deeply that love has shaped and renewed our lives, how much we realize that God's love/grace is the center of reality.

We usually judge by ourselves: Do you agree with me, do things like I do, avoid what I avoid?

The Gospel challenges us to realize that we each have been called into a long path toward God's Love, Grace, Faithfulness, Justice. A long way to go! Our relationship to each other is not to judge or despise, but to learn and practice love – helping not blocking each other.

Being Right and Being Right (14-16)

Remarkably, Paul is clear that in these controversies there can be a real right and wrong. The journey toward God involves real growth from weakness to strength. This is not tolerance in things that don't matter, but the practice of love when things carry great weight.

Paul knows that no food is unclean in itself. But he also knows that it can be a language, a

sign, that expresses of faith or faithlessness and much else (cf Rev 2:20). It is that meaning

for a person that matters. Paul knows that he's right to know that all food is clean. The

knowledge is truly empowering. But there is a deeper rightness. God's love is the heart of

everything. If my knowledge is used not to empower but to tempt and to undermine

another's relation to Christ, my right undermines God's love, becomes opposite of right.

It is more right to love and care for my brother or sister than to be right in asserting knowledge.

Paul wants the weaker believer to grow, not to be destroyed. Ideas, practices are powerful.

Every relationship is a challenge to grow toward the practice of God's love in which real

strength, renewal, transformation in us flourish, learning to love as Christ has loved us.