

Romans

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- [0 : 00] I'll ask you to turn with me this evening to Romans chapter 14 and reading verses 7 and 8.
- The verses 7 and 8 in Romans chapter 14. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself, for whether we live.
- The Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord. Whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord.
- In these verses, I read the 7th and 8th verses in this chapter to the Romans.
- Paul, as frequently we have seen, brings forward a great statement of truth, of the blessed and far-reaching truth from those things that he has been dealing with.
- [1 : 49] Let us just consider the things that he is dealing with in this 40th chapter. For he comes to speak of matters that are matters of considerable concern.
- He devotes some attention to them. And that the Spirit of God has left them on record in the Word of God, so that we are to see, we must believe.
- When I say that, I do not mean any sort of disrespect, but we must believe that they are matters that are for our attention.
- We should pay heed to them. The Apostle is arguing for moderation, for love, for that spirit of agreement and union between brethren in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- For moderation. It may be that it is necessary in our day to speak in an explanatory way.
- [3 : 22] What is moderation? Well, you have some idea, but I just want to put it in a way of illustration to you.
- If I say that a family lives in a moderately sized house. Well, you have, as they perhaps, a somewhat imprecise idea, if you do not know the family at all.
- But you have some idea. But you have some idea. And what is more important, you do not surely have the idea that they live nowhere at all.
- For you do not imagine that they live in the top flat of a skyscraper block.
- If I say that a family lives in a moderate fashion on the road at a moderate speed.
- [4 : 31] Well, you do not imagine that they are stopped still. That they never go anywhere.
- You do not have the idea, surely, that they are continually going backwards. And you certainly, I am sure, don't have any picture of them constantly driving round in circles.
- Now, why do I say this? I say it because it seems to me sometimes today that if the word moderate is used, people have the idea that there is no opinion at all.
- Or that it is something that swallows everything, every extreme. It is as though those who advocate a spirit of moderation are supposed to be without any conviction or foundation.
- Well, actually, from those simple illustrations, you may see that the word does not mean anything like that. It means a regulated, an ordered principle.
- [6 : 02] It means to be between the extremes. To be proceeding in a direction and a way that is not continually swayed to one hand or the other.

Well, so I understand it. And so I see it presented. The apostle is speaking of those who are in the faith.

He is not speaking, you see, of those who have no faith. He is not speaking of those who have different beliefs than the faith of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He is not speaking of those who have no knowledge of salvation. Oh no, very much the reverse.

He is speaking of those who are believers. Of those who love the Lord Jesus Christ. Of those who know salvation by the blood of Jesus Christ.

[7 : 23] Of those who do not necessarily agree in every point in particular with others who may have different views and ideas upon certain matters.

Now, those matters are often termed, have been termed, I suppose, for several generations, things in different.

The heading of this pulpit, tribal, speaks in that way. Men may not condemn each other for things indifferent.

Perhaps the word indifferent is not, in my view, the best word to use. For, in one sense, to the Christian, to the true disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, nothing should be, in a sense, indifferent.

But you will have some impression again of what this word means. We might say, it means those things that are not fundamental.

[8 : 47] Those things that accompany the gospel of Christ. Those things that relate to the manner of our life and through the practical details of our daily living.

They are not indifferent in the sense that we should be concerned as those who profess to be the Lord's with every detail of our life.

We should be concerned to serve him in every way. But they are indifferent in the sense that they do not make the salvation to be in doubt.

They do not affect the standing of the particular believer in the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are things in which we may differ and yet be one in Christ Jesus. Now, the apostle, therefore, speaks of those who are weak in the faith.

[10 : 21] And he particularly appears to mean that they are weak in the sense that they are doubtful about certain aspects and liberties.

They are dubious about, for instance, the question whether they may eat all things.

It was, of course, a matter that was very much to the forefront in the days of the apostles. As we read through the Acts of the Apostles, we find that there was a difficulty and there was dissension.

those Jewish believers who had been converted at that background. There were certain meats that were unclean.

There were certain foods that were, by the law of Moses, forbidden to them. Having been all their life brought up in that tradition, you can understand that it was not easy for them, suddenly to go contrary to that, and suddenly to lord shout, to eat pork, to have all sorts of gain, and so on.

[11 : 58] this was a great point of the difficulty. Whereas, of course, there were the Gentile believers who had no such background and did not come into that difficulty whatsoever.

But some of the converted Jews evidently felt that they ought to respect their opinions. and there were those of the Gentile believers evidently who rather despised and scorned the Jewish converts for having any such troubles.

Well, the word of God speaks to them. Now, we may say, of course, well, this is not an urgent matter for us today.

No, not in that respect. But the lessons of it, I believe, are good and suitable and needful for us just the same.

Because we are to realise that there are those who may have opinions and scruples who may feel in their life that they cannot do certain things.

[13 : 21] even, perhaps, may not eat or drink certain things. Whereas others may feel that they have a liberty. There needs to be the spirit of moderation.

And more than that, of course, there needs to be the great spirit of love and concern. and that we are to be careful that we are not overcome and bogged down in what the Apostle here describes as doubtful disputations, arguments about those particulars that are tedious and profitless.

we are to be concerned that we do not judge and condemn one another. We are to be concerned that we do not allow in ourselves those things which are hurtful and are necessary that are stumbling blocks to other people.

and that we are to be concerned that in those things which we claim our conscience is clear and that we allow ourselves full liberty we are not going against the word of God and his commandment that we are not in doubt upon those things.

Happy says the apostle is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. That is that it is not sufficient just to say to ourselves well I have no bad conscience about what I do what I allow myself what I indulge in my life but we are to ask ourselves the questions is it right in the sight of God is it something that is necessary and good and does not offend others is it something that causes a stumbling block to the faith of other brethren notice how the apostle argues in this chapter in a personal way that it is good neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine nor anything whereby thy brother stumbling or is offended or is made weak he has a parallel saying in a very personal and particular way as he writes to the

[16 : 34] Corinthians and he says if meat make my brother to offend I will eat no meat while the world lasts while the world endures he argues in that place that although he has a liberty he is free from the restrictions of the Mosaic law yet if it is offensive to others and a stumbling block it is not necessary for him to avail himself of that privilege it is not something that is fundamentally important it is not something that he says he must inevitably and unmistakably do he is not laid down that he must eat pork otherwise he is not a true disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ you see therefore he is concerned so these are things that should be lessons to us drawn out of the chapter first that we are to consider that liberty that we allow ourselves is it right and proper according to the word of God are the things that we do in our life is the manner of it are the indulgences whatever they are the entertainers the way in which we spend our leisure time or whatever it may be are these right that according to the word of

God that our conscience condemn us at all in them are we doubtful about them and if we say no we are not well are they an occasion of stumbling an offence to others is it necessary for us to insist upon them if they are offensive and difficult for others to accept do we walk in love are we more concerned for the honour the praise of the Lord than for our own enjoyment are we more concerned for the benefit and the unity of the church of Christ than for our own comfort and our own enjoyment and these you see are very serious questions that we should consider the important the important speaks in this way in the chapter some have taken the words of this first verse weak in the faith as applying in the widest sense and

I do not say that they are wrong it may be that we have taken that widely as meaning those who have the little faith that the Lord Jesus Christ expressed it in his own words that against those who have great faith undoubtedly there are differences in the degree of faith that is personal faith saving faith marked that it is the nature the quality of faith that is supremely important to have faith as a grain of mustard seed said the Lord Jesus Christ is to possess living vital faith faith that can remove mantens the quality of faith of course is so important faith in the

Lord Jesus Christ that living faith the faith of God's elect it is described that we faith all that is infinitely better than to be without faith some men write all the Timothy for all men he says have not faith faith ah there is an infinite difference in we but having faith there are undoubtedly those differences the words of the Lord Jesus Christ present that to us he spoke to his disciples at times in a way of reproach oh thou of little faith wherefore didst thou doubt they needed their faith increase where is your faith he said to them on one occasion did it seem to be so small as to promote that question where is it where is your faith but they did have faith there were others who had great faith so as we thought we remark of one or two this morning we may think of the gospels of that centurion for instance who so trusted in the word of the

Lord that he said there is no need to come down to my house speak the word only and my servant shall be healed I have not found so great faith so Jesus no not in Israel he can enter great faith oh woman great as thy faith here down to thee even as thou will there are signal instances so you see the difference the diversity and it may be I say that we may think of these things those who are weak in faith certainly are not to be condemned and of course we are to ask ourselves if we have a question in a very personal way how great is your faith is thy faith faith that increases has it grown is there any increase there was a amount of desire in the apostles' cards for an increase of faith and the word speaks of faith that grows it does not present for us faith as a static sort of thing as a theoretical idea that once received is therefore only lodged in that way that admits of no alteration no increase no growth why the whole nature of

[24 : 44] Christian life is that it grows there is that which is living the believer is not compared to an inanimate object of always to that which is living and growing we have to grow up into him in all things who is our him so it is a serious question again isn't it to our hearts is our faith growing have we great faith if we have not great faith faith then of course we should be very careful and we should certainly be watchful of our words concerning those who have little faith and even if we said if we were in such a place and such an assurance to say that we have great faith still still the word of God presents to us that we should be careful and not condemnatory that we should receive those who are weak in the faith that there is need for those who have been favored and blessed of the

Lord who take courage and confirm and to edify others in the beginning of chapter 15 I anticipate somewhat of course but still there is the great principle stated said out plainly we then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please ourselves here is the word of the Lord saying those who consider and feel that they are strong in faith have a duty and responsibility not to condemn not to scorn or despise those who are weak in the faith but to dare and to put themselves out to encourage and confirm them what a great responsibility it lays upon believers but

I do incline to the view that the apostle here in chapter 14 is not speaking in the first instance so much about degrees of assurance in faith as he is speaking of particular feelings and concerns about the practical details of life and what may be allowed in the way of life because we go on to say in verse 2 for one believeth that he may eat all things another whom is weak eateth hers the other great factor that is introduced in this chapter is the observance of days here the word of God is not of course speaking about the

Lord's day it is not speaking about the day of worship I judge that there is no question but that one day in seven is to be set apart is a fundamental principle of the scripture or fruit that there is to be the worship of the Lord that one day is the Lord's day we hear in these gospel days consider it and we take it to be the first day of the week today our Lord Jesus Christ arose from the dead that is right and proper and if so of course there is that common generally speaking desire and love

I know that we have come in the days when there has been a great erosion and even among professed questions sadly there is not that same respect and regard for the Lord's day but still it may be said there is to a great degree that general agreement that there is a day of worship to be set apart the apostle then is not speaking of that point that is taken as being understood but he is speaking of course about particular celebrations the feast days or the fast days again of course the Jewish tradition had those particular seasons and the days that were to be observed and there was a difficulty there were some who felt that this was all the polish there were others who argued there is still that taste and that purpose and meaning in them and so the word of

[31 : 20] God argues for that moderation that tolerance that spirit of love is that I think today we may think of those special seasons and the holiday times that are general amongst us and apply the principles there I think on Christmas day morning I did make the point in preface to my remarks that it would be very difficult for us to ignore completely especially of course when the Lord's day came upon Christmas day anyway but how do you go about it if you were going to not observe it well alright you could not observe it to the Lord I suppose but it would seem to me that you would need to be very strong very determined and if you had a family you would have to be really remarkably determined

I would imagine you see alright I would argue that if people did heartily believe that it was only a favorite festival that there was nothing in it that there was no reason to celebrate the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ and in fact it would be quite and positively wrong to do so on that particular day well let them not observe the day but don't let them condemn and do not let them to speak with discordfulness and derision of those of doom and of course let us who feel as I feel and that over the years but before you that there is a right and a proper place and that we may do so as unto the Lord that we may observe the day desiring to do so in that proper spirit and by the grace of God let us not despise those who do feel strongly and argue in that way let us in love and concern regarding desire as there indeed there might be a level of course we sometimes do fall into inconsistencies don't we and I know there is much that perhaps today goes beyond the real spirit of worship here again is a great principle put before us let every man says the apostle be fully persuaded in his own mind it is not good enough for us to do things just because others do them it is not good enough for us to be boldless and careless and inconsiderate we are not to argue about the particular days when it's always been done and observed like this and therefore it's right that is not a proper way at all nor of course on the other hand is it right and proper merely to be anti and opposed only from the spirit of contrariness and desiring merely to be different it is possible of course

I think I may say to some extent I'm loaded in my own spirit to be rebellious just for the sake of wanting to be rebellious and different from everybody else but of course that again is no right and proper principle so the word is saying to us let us be fully persuaded let us be assured in the sight of life let us do what we do not just in a spirit of tradition nor just in a spirit of contrary and rebellion against tradition but let us do so in desire for all the Lord who can serve to obey his word and then you see from these things in these seven and eight verses the apostle comes to a great and blessed conclusion for none of us liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself for whether we live we live under the

Lord and whether we die we die under the Lord whether we live therefore or die we are the Lord surely for one thing the word is saying to us in the first place that it is not our time and main purpose in life to condemn other people not our main purpose to set other people right but it is to be our prime our main purpose to live under the Lord and to die under him that's a great point isn't it I am not saying like you that we are not to have any opinions about right and wrong of course we have we must have it is implicit in the knowledge of God that we should deserve that which is good and that which is evil the word of God itself presents to us that truth now that

Christ speaks then shall he return to discern between him that is good and him that is evil the knowledge of God has that impressive understanding it is impossible to be godly and not to have this distinction this appreciation this devoid understanding so I am not saying that there is a blurring of that which is right and wrong and certainly and far from saying that we should be unconcerned about others that is not what the apostle is saying here he is not saying that we are to be selfish in fact very much the reverse of course very much the reverse but he is saying of course here is the great point here is the prime concern not what am I doing to make others right or to condemn them where they are wrong but how is my life how is my character am I giving to the

[39 : 45] Lord am I in the place where he would have me be am I doing that which he would have me to do am I living to his praise am I concerned to be right with him am I concerned to serve him in the gospel of his grace am I concerned that when I come to the end of this life I have for some have so adequately and eloquently expressed it nothing to do but to die in a that sense of the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ and to have that hope of entering into his presence and his glory by the mercy of Jesus and then let us consider that the apostle is saying to us here that the two live whether we live we live unto the

Lord we are to recognize that those who trust in him those who seek his direction those who are guided by the Holy Spirit or remember in Romans 8 we have been told that many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God those have that assurance that he cares for them watches over them and that they are in that place where he appoints and there is that work for them to do that only they can do that he has been told that he has been told to my mind that when we read the

Gospels we read that the Lord Jesus Christ he held the altitudes we read how he spoke to them but we read in more detail and what he did for individuals there is that which he said to the disciples of John the Baptist go and tell them what you have seen here the lame are healed made to walk the blind receive their sight and so on here's a great verse many miracles the healing that he did and the poor have the Gospel preached to them so no doubt they went and told John the Baptist those great things but how blessed we read Father of the Blind Man Jesus stopped and called him spoke to him in a particular way the man who was blind from his birth in John chapter 9 the man by the poor dead

Easter Jesus came there stopped by him dealt with him in a particular way found him in the temple afterwards the woman of the West notable those well-known Easter Jesus sat upon the man way to that woman what far reaching consequences it had there were many who came to believe in that city who heard it for themselves Jesus dead with that woman there was Anathons in the book of the Acts we do not read of his life before we do not read of him after that time so we read of that God humanity how he was sent to grab a sword to lay his hands upon him and under the grace of

God what an influence he had but Philip going into the desert to be into the word of God leaving the popular city of Samaria with all the work that had been done going into the desert finding a man in a coterie on his way to Ethiopia but you see fear is what Jesus turned here living unto the Lord doing his work in the place where he would have us to leave and those who died and died unto the Lord for there has been even in their death that preciousness the psalmist maintains precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints and so let us understand that it is not the human aspect it is not the greatness in the ordinary logical sense of what we are doing that is important whether we are doing it unto the

[45 : 53] Lord whether we are living in that way that he would have us believe whether we are the Lord live therefore or die we are the Lord what a blessing privilege what an assurance it is for those who are in Christ Jesus what a sweet hope about how do we understand it is that which is assured who believe us to those who are in Christ Jesus to those who venture upon him who flee for rest if they live they are his for there is nothing in life that can possibly separate them from his life and when they die they are his body has promised to receive them