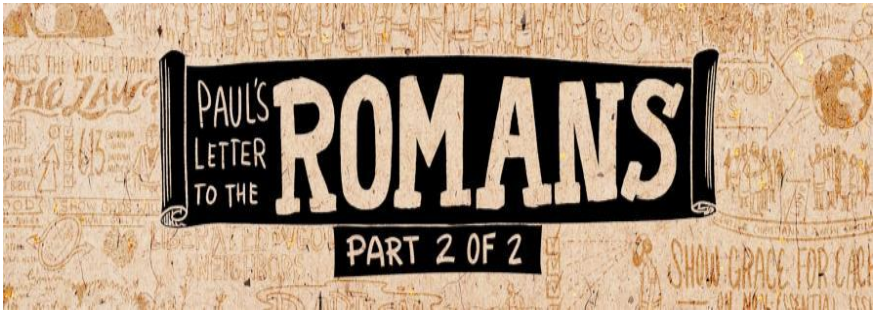

"I Beg to Differ"

Romans 14:1-12

Have you ever got into an argument with someone and come to the conclusion that you just couldn't work it out? We all think we are right and that our "positions" are Biblical and logical. If we are not careful, we judge the other person as less knowledgeable, less spiritual or less logical. How do we handle legitimate differences in the church? How can we find common ground without compromising our beliefs? How can we disagree without being disagreeable. How do we converse with one another, without being combative? The bottom line: How do we love, not judge one another?

I. The Context of Tolerance (v. 1-3)

A. It's all about Love
The extended context is Paul's commentary on Jesus' command to love one another!

1. Chapter 12: Love serves (spiritual gifts) and love must be genuine.

2. Chapter 13: Love must be submissive (especially to God placed authorities) and it must be universal ("owe no man anything but love one another" v. 8).

3. Chapter 14: Love must be patient and tolerant of other people's views…especially those that are less enlightened than us! ☺

4. Ray Stedman says that Romans 14 discusses Christian's favorite indoor sport: Trying to change each other! It really comes down to how much "fellowship" you can have with someone you don't agree with.

B. Differing Views

1. As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. v.1. Accept him, don't reject him. Not for the purpose of debating him! He is brother in Christ; God made him part of the family, not you! Some of us like to "straighten people out"! The goal here isn't to prove you are right! No matter what, they are part of God's family and we "belong" to one another!

2. **2** One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. **3** Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him.

   - Wow! A word from God to you vegetarians! ☺ Actually we know that some new believers (especially Jewish) had problems eating certain kinds of meat (pork) and because of where it came from: meat sacrificed to idols in the heathen temples. It was offensive on 2 fronts: It wasn't kosher and in essence some believed it was tantamount to worshipping an idol by eating it! Weak does not mean less theologically sound. It means a more sensitive conscience.

   - Others (gentile believers said) meat is meat! These 2 areas were not much of a concern to Gentile believers that didn't hold to those positions. Get over it!

   - These "weak" Jewish brothers saw these strong Gentile believers as immoral because of their libertarian views. The Gentile believers thought

they were way too sensitive and exaggerating things a bit!

3. In church world there are always going to be differing viewpoints on things that may be important to you, but not the kingdom! For those who trumpet freedom in Christ, we look at our narrower brothers as uptight, strict and way too conservative. We see them as legalists! Someone has defined a legalist as "one who lives in mortal fear that someone, somewhere is enjoying himself!" ☺ Seriously, they love the Lord and often their choices have been influenced by their environment, fear or out of true devotion to God!

4. For those who are more conservative, we see our "liberal" brothers as taking license, pushing Biblical boundaries and lacking holiness. We see them as being on the slippery slope to liberalism and compromise! We have a tendency to say no, you shouldn't and how can you do this? It has been going on like this for centuries and both sides are equally judgmental!

5. Note: Paul is not talking about… Differences of primary doctrinal issues; but rather secondary issues where there is legitimate room for disagreement or conclusion.

6. What is in important is not who holds what position, but what he says to both groups. He is confronting the judgmental attitude of those who are arguing about things that are not essential to salvation.
   - He doesn't condemn or chastise either group.
   - He takes no sides and declares no winners.
   - He doesn't ask the strong or weak to change their positions.
   - He does ask that they accept each other on peripheral matters.

C. Gray Area Decision Making

Throughout church history, there have always been differences of opinions about who or what is proper or right, or more holy. Let's just take a little jaunt down the road of church history…

1. 50's: coed swim parties, lipstick; zippers vs. buttons
2. 60's: churches with drums and guitars…or no instruments at all; playing with casino cards. Rook became the approved playing card of the Baptists; going to school dances; working on Sundays.
3. 70's: length of skirts…too short; length of hair…too long; women wearing pants in church; spiritual gifts (sign gifts); Rock music: Beatles vs. Beethoven; Larry Norman, "Why should the Devil have all the good music?"
4. 80's: smoking pipes and cigars; drinking wine or beer;
5. 90's: length of hair…short! Moral Majority/Politics
6. 2000's: Calvin/Reform vs. Arminian; Emergent church; Social Justice issues: To feed or not to feed; Division between Boomers and Gen X.

My personal convictions don't have to become your moral imperative! When we assume that our choice becomes normative for everyone, we have crossed a line! If the Bible is unclear (or gray or neutral!) then we give freedom to others to decide for themselves what is right!

II. The Case for Judging (v. 4-6)

A. It's not our place!

1. First and foremost we are not to judge one another because it isn't our place to! We are the Lord's. He is the one who will bring conviction. Our responsibility is not to try and "change" people! Only God knows their heart!

4 Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

2. They were judging one another in 2 areas:

5 One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. **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.

- Which day to worship? The Jews liked the Saturday in deference to the Sabbath. We see that today with 7th day Adventists. The Gentiles like Sunday in honor of Jesus' resurrection on the first day of the week!
- It also refers to which days we honor the Lord: every day is a day to honor Him or just once a week?
- Fasting or not? Eat or not to eat in honor of the Lord. Either way, you can give thanks!

B. God's View of Judging

It is clear that we have propensity to judge other people! What does God say about judging? Is there a Biblical point of view?

1. We are commanded **not to judge** others (Mt. 7:1; I Cor. 4:5; James 4:11). This is especially true in relation to motives or intentions.

- Mt. 7:1 Do not judge, lest you be judged (KJV)
- I Cor. 4:5 Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, *but wait* until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of *men's* hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God. (NASB)
- James 4:11 Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges

his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. (ESV)

2. We are never to **condone** immorality or injustice.

   This does not mean that we fall into moral complacency or apathetic spirituality. We can evaluate clear, unbiblical or immoral behavior. There are legitimate evaluations that we make between right and wrong. We have plenty of examples where moral judgments were made.

   - John the Baptist: Herod's adultery (Mark 6:18)
   - Jesus: Pharisees (Mt. 23) and money changers
   - Paul: Sexual immorality (I Cor. 5:1)

3. We stand under **God's** judgment too!

   No superiority or blind self-righteousness. The problem is that we believe that God is pleased with us, but we are not so sure about those other guys! ☺ How much can we tolerate those guys who see things differently from us?

C. Where I judge others?

1. People who just come to church, but don't want to volunteer to serve at the church.
2. People who avail themselves of all that we have to offer at ABF, and yet give very little of their tithe to the church.
3. People who claim to be something that they aren't: hypocrites. So am I!
4. When I feel judged!
5. In any areas I feel pretty good about! Ex. Tithing, serving, etc.

D. Other areas where Christians "disagree"…

1. Home School, Christian School or private school

2. Republican or Democrat
3. Wine or alcohol vs. abstinence
4. Pre, mid or post tribulation rapture view
5. Premillennial, amillenial, postmillennial views

E. Satan wins when we create scales of self-righteous performance. If he can get us to focus on the non-essentials and neglect the essentials he effectively neutralizes us.

F. Remember: As Rupertus Meldenius a Lutheran reformer or Marco Antonio de Dominus a Catholic priest in the 1600's depending on whose history you believe…

- In essentials, unity
- In non essentials, liberty
- In all things, charity!

III. The Command of Lordship (v.7-12)

A. Ultimately, this is an issue of **lordship** in our lives!

When you are tempted to judge someone else, who are you really going after? God! We are saying God isn't handling the sanctification process they way we would! We are both the Lords. Let's live for Him and let Him live through us!

7 For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. **8** 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.

B. **Christ** alone has the right to judge

9 For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living **10** Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; **11** for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." **12** So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

1. So stop trying to take His place. Let's stop playing the Holy Spirit in other people's lives.
2. We all will stand before God one day

C. 3 buckets: What are you willing to…?

1. **Die** for:
   - The gospel; matters pertaining to salvation!
   - Deity and humanity of Christ
   - What is essential? I Cor. 15:3-4 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, **4** that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,
   - My family
2. **Defend**:
   - Our doctrinal statement
   - Inerrancy of God's Word (II Tim. 3:16-17)
   - Sanctity of Human Life
3. **Discuss**:
   - End times, baptism, communion, Christian liberty, gray areas
   - The key is knowing what to put into which bucket! We need wisdom!

D. Illustration: Zwingli vs. Luther.

1. In October 1529 Ulrich Zwingli (Switzerland) met Martin Luther (Germany) in Marburg (now Northern France). They debated 15 points of doctrine and agreed on the person of Christ, sanctification, authority of the Scripture, the Holy Spirit, grace through faith, etc. But they could not agree on the nature of communion. Martin Luther's position,

"Jesus said this is my body, and so the bread becomes the literal body of Jesus". Zwingli countered that Jesus said, "I am the vine" and used it as a metaphor, not literally. The heated debate ended in a standoff. After many days Zwingli offered his hand in reconciliation, willing to "agree to disagree" but remain in fellowship; but Luther declined declaring that Zwingli had no place in the Christian church.

2. Zwingli went home devastated and thus began the first division in the Protestant reformation. The Lutheran church was born in Germany and spread into Scandinavia; the reform church grew in Switzerland, England, and Holland.

3. 2 years later Zwingli died on the battlefield defending Zurich. He was one of 500 casualties in a battle that lasted about an hour. Luther said of him in his death, " he died in great and many sins and blasphemy; he became a heathen; and he perished by the sword because he took up the sword. Luther went on to say that he would rather be torn to pieces and burned than to "make common cause" with Zwingli

4. Contrast what Luther said of Zwingli: "Luther is a warrior of God who searches the Scriptures with such great earnestness as no one else on earth for these 100 years has done; we should justly thank God for having raised such an instrument for His honor; and we do this with pleasure!

5. Who would you rather be like?

6. Catalyst quote: You are more important than my view!

Life Group/ Family Discussion Questions

Lean In: (Ice Breaker)

1. What was the last "dumb" argument you had with your spouse or a friend? What was it about?

Look Down (Observing the text)

2. What were Paul's readers "arguing" about?
3. Why did they both think they were right?

Look Out (Understanding the text)

4. How does our church fall into the trap of judging one another?
5. What items need to be moved to a different bucket as a result of what you have heard today?

Look In (applying the text)

6. In what areas do you need to quit judging others?

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