



"Oh, How Good It Is, part 2"¹

Romans 14:5-12

There's a quote that's attributed to the philosopher George Santayana: **"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."** This philosopher is saying that history teaches us lessons for today. If we don't look at history and learn from the past, then we'll enter into the similar mistakes and terrors of the past. I think this is truly not only individually and societally, but I think this is true in God's church as well. One of the studies I'm so grateful I entered into (years ago) was the study of Church History. As I learned stories from Polycarp, Blandina, Ambrose, Patrick, Wycliffe, the Puritans (and so many others), I've seen errors that the church has repeated throughout history. One of those relates to the unity and purity of the church.

What I mean is this: generally throughout history, there are a group of Christians who are very concerned for "purity" in either doctrine or practice that they'll separate from other believers if those believers don't agree with them. From disagreements of when to celebrate Easter to divides between Calvinism and Arminianism, and everything in between. One of the more helpful examples of this was in the 18th and 19th centuries in England between Puritans and Separatists. Separatists divided from the church over issues they thought were important (and were important), but the Puritans stayed in to patiently continue to speak the truth of the Word with others. A decade or two into the movement, what was discovered was that the Puritans were more sharpened in their faith, growing in more doctrines. Yet, the Separatists hadn't been sharpened as much.

The reason I tell you this is because this type of "puritan" and separatist" divide has been happening since the first century, and it continues to happen today. With the plethora of information on the internet, we have what's called "discernment bloggers" who are known for essentially almost only ever reporting on who they're against – making conclusions that don't seem to fit with what the people they're attacking would say. Then there are simply articles after articles of professing Christians attacking other Christians for all sorts of various things. To add to this, some people will even attack Christians if those Christians don't renounce other Christians that they think are in the wrong. About a month or more ago, I saw a more prominent Christian tweet of another prominent Christian, saying that soon that Christian is going to apostasize. And while there was a genuine disagreement, studying church history taught me that there's not a direct correlation between this difference and apostasy.

Is this how professing Christians are to behave towards one another? Condemning one another and despising each other? At this point, some will say: Yes, this is why I don't like the church. Yet, if you follow that logic then you should not like families either. In the healthiest of families, there are accusations made towards one another. Yet, I'm not supposed to reject my children because they argue with each other and maybe hurt each other emotionally or physically. Instead, I am to train and teach

¹ This manuscript is still in the rough draft phase. I recommend you utilize these notes in conjunction to the sermon to gain greater insight and clarity.

them. I am to be patient with them and seek their grow. We actually see this demeanor in Paul as he relates to the church in Rome. This church had its disagreements. And they weren't trite issues. Those whom Paul refers to as weak were standing on Old Testament Scripture. There were certain food issues they thought ought to be applied in this new covenant in Jesus. They were seeking to be biblical. That's a good thing, right? Yet, other Christians in the church were simply looking down on these brothers and sisters – despising them for their lack of "freedom." Clearly, there was a palpable tension between these Christians because Paul takes time to address them on a few different issues.

But he addresses them as brothers and sisters in Christ. He addresses them with patience and love. Even while he does teach his viewpoint, he still has patience towards both sides and points them to the reality to focus on God – not simply on themselves and who's right or wrong. All the while, I think Paul demonstrates the heart of God towards his children. God is patient and loving and kind towards us. We all have weaknesses, misinterpretations of the Bible, sins in our lives. Yet, God is merciful and gracious towards us.

Remember that this section we're in flows from Romans 12. We are to be transformed. We are to be sacrifices who are living, holy and acceptable to God. And the only way we can live this way is in view of God's tremendous, infinite mercies towards us in Christ Jesus! In verse 1 of chapter 14, Paul tells the church to welcome one another. Why? Because, in verse 3, Paul says that God has welcomed us! Think of this, Christian. If you have understood what Jesus has done in the place of sinners – that he and he alone is the perfect human and he is the representative of all who turn from their sin and turn to him for forgiveness and life. If you recognize that he bore God's infinite justice on the cross, and then that because of Jesus, God's arms are open wide for you – how can you treat Christians with closed arms? Shouldn't we instead want to believe all things, hope all things and endure all things? Isn't this God's love towards us? Yes! And, in the verses we're reading today, we see a continuation from the verses Mark Buhl preached on last week. That's why I entitled the sermon, "Oh, How Good It Is, part 2." Transformational love within the church is expressed through welcoming one another – to condemning or despising. So, before I go any further, let's read verses 5-12 together after I pray [Pray for Troyer, Dolores Kleinheksel and Harbor Lights Baptist].

⁵One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶The 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. ⁷For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. ⁸For 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. ⁹For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. ¹⁰Why 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; ¹¹for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." ¹²So then each of us will give an account of himself to God. ²

² [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 14:5–12.

Continuing on from the larger context, I think the main idea of these verses is that **Transformational love welcomes fellow believers even while we possess differing viewpoints on various issues**. Before I go further in this, I want to clarify something. Right here, some people might say, “Ok, but we can’t disagree on everything, right?” You might have a fear that if we simply accept anyone who calls themselves a Christian, then we will let go of the Truth of the gospel and the Word. That’s a valid concern. And, that’s not what Paul says here. Hold on and I’ll explain more later.

I also want you to know two more things before diving into the text. I’m not going to be commenting much on these things, but we see hints to trinitarian teaching here. You have words like “Lord,” “God,” and “Christ.” And we see these terms relating to either God the Father or Jesus, and then we have some terms that seem to refer to both. As Jesus said, he and the Father are one. Now, as we move into the text, I did want to explain that my main points are going to go in a different order than how Paul writes. There are two basic conclusions he gives in these 8 verses, and those conclusions are my main point. What Paul does is he gives commands to the people and then gives the reason for living this way. I’m going to give the reason first, and then the commands. So, transformation love welcomes fellow believers even while we possess differing viewpoints on various issues because:

1. We embrace Jesus as our Lord (vv. 5-9).

Let’s start by reading verses 7-9 first: ⁷For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. ⁸For 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. ⁹For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. ³

Focus on the “so then” statement. This is Paul’s emphasis. Why would we welcome one another? Because we all are the Lord’s. Even that Christian who seems more free than I? Yes! Even that Christian that I’m looking down on and calling legalistic? Yes! Think about this carefully. How do you keep a weaker or stronger person at arms length from you? So many times I’ve heard people throw out the term legalist, and they use it almost as an excuse for them not to be around them or to have some aspect of despising towards them. Let’s just roll our eyes and call the person a legalist! Those who are weaker might say, “Well, bad company corrupts good morals.” Yet, if that person is a believer, are they really bad company? They’re your brother and sister in Christ! Listen to what Paul says here. If someone has turned to Christ, they are the Lord’s.

This brings up two things in my mind that need clarifying. First, remember what Mark said last week. When Paul says one is weak in the faith, that means that they simply haven’t learned more of the ramifications of the gospel. They have faith, but they need to grow in learning. The reality is that all of us, in various ways are weak in our faith. No matter how strong you are, you’re still learning the ramifications of the gospel in your life. Therefore, welcome one another. Secondly, if we are the Lord’s, that means that we are not ultimately subject to one another. When you despise or condemn another person, you are acting as though you are the Lord. It’s like you’re climbing up on the judgment seat of Christ and saying that you matter.

I remember a few years ago when someone I hadn’t talked to for probably almost 20 years saw a Facebook post of mine they didn’t like. They sent me a private message and said, “I’m ashamed of what you posted.” There was nothing biblical in their statement. They didn’t point me to consider the Word.

³ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 14:7–9.

All they did was say that they were ashamed of me. I didn't respond, and all I can say to this day is, "I'd rather you be ashamed of me than Jesus." Yet, we can get caught in this trap. We can make us central. We can make people feel ashamed by declaring our judgment and our despising. That's not Christ-focused. That's *us*-focused.

But Paul says Jesus is *our* Lord. Therefore, our communication and our confession must be on Jesus! Paul says that none of us lives to himself or dies to himself. Keep in mind here that Paul is talking to Christians. He's not talking to people who don't turn to, trust and follow Jesus. He's speaking to Christians. Therefore, as Christians, our lives are hid with Christ in God! Our existence (including our lives and deaths) are the Lord. No matter what happens in this life or in my death, I am the Lord's. I'm under his control and also his care. Paul emphasizes this by stating and restating this point.

Then Paul nail his final point to emphasize Jesus' sacrifice. Jesus is our Lord because he died and lived again! Paul isn't saying that Jesus wasn't God before he died and rose again. Instead, Paul is saying that in his humanity, he is now Lord over the new covenant and new creation. So, we can ask ourselves a question: Did any of us here live the perfect life that sinners could never live? Did any of us here die in the place of sinners and provide forgiveness and cleansing for all who come to Jesus in faith? Did any of us here rise from the dead and ascend to Heaven to bring people from every tribe nation and tongue?

All of us must answer no. Only Jesus did! And Paul says Jesus did this so that he might be Lord over the dead and living. Meaning, he is Lord over all – and we are not. As a result, we must crucify the desires within us that misrepresent Jesus' Lordship. If someone is a believer in Jesus, we must accurately portray that through how we relate to them. So, what does this look like? Let's go back to verses 5-6:
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.⁴

Paul gives what seems to be a real-life example within the church. One person in the church esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. More than likely, this is a disagreement between Jews and Gentiles in the church. Jews are still seeking to understanding how the old and new covenant relate to each other. And, of course, in the 10 commandments, you have "honor the Sabbath" as an everlasting ordinance. In addition, there are feast days and festivals in the Scriptures. Then, in Acts, we're told that the apostles now had a regular corporate gathering on Sunday in the place of Saturday because Jesus rose from the dead on Sunday.

How does this all affect how we relate to our days? Well, some Christians said, "No day is better than another!" Other Christians said, "there are some days more significant." What Paul does here is very interesting. At this point, he doesn't settle the dispute by telling them what to think. Instead, he tells them *how* to think. He shows us that since Jesus is Lord over all of us, we shouldn't be focused on arguing with each other over who's right. Instead, we should

Study to be convinced of God's teaching on the topic. Since Jesus is the Lord, we should be concerned about what God says, right? I think we as humans have a nasty tendency to put a lot of trust in our interpretations of things. We often simply assume that we're right. But when Paul says, "Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind," he's saying, "Study to ensure whether or not you're right."

⁴ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 14:5–6.

Listen, Paul tells us elsewhere that the Paul is given to us for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness. It's trustworthy and we should not be afraid to study the Scriptures to see if we're wrong.

How does this apply then to the weak or the strong? The weak want to automatically judge someone as being wrong and sinful and maybe not even a Christian because of their practices. If they go back to the Scriptures to study (and not simply insert their interpretations), they will grow. The strong, on the other hand, want to despise and look down upon. But if they go back to the Scriptures, they might be more understanding of the weak – remembering how God has been gracious to them. The only way they know what they know is by grace.

This reminds me of a conversation I had with David this past week. We were talking about a couple books we've read, and I was talking about a book I read last year. I said that there is no other book written by a Christian that I've disagreed with more and yet loved so much. As we talked a little more I said that there is beauty in reading books from Christians we disagree with. For one, they emphasize verses I wouldn't have thought of. My interpretation might focus on other verses, but this Christian helps me to see other things.

This takes me back to the difference between Puritans and Separatists. The Separatists really couldn't sharpen each other because they didn't get differing viewpoints. The Puritans; however, could be sharpened more and more. Within the local church, the same is true. We, as Ventura, have a core belief statement, and within this framework, we also celebrate diverse viewpoints. And, we should celebrate it. We shouldn't despise or condemn one another. We should talk to, listen to, grow with one another. So, let me ask you, "Are there viewpoints that Christians have here or elsewhere that may tempt you to despise or condemn?" Instead of simply digging your head in the sand and affirming your viewpoint, maybe it would be good to listen to them, read the other side. Grow in the Scriptures by sharpening each other. This statement of Paul's calls us to this. And, by the way, Ventura, in so many ways, I see this unity in the midst of diversity here. I love how we can be gracious towards one another, pursue Jesus together, and learn from one another here.

But also notice that Paul also says that the two sides could be fully convinced and disagree. And yet, we can be unified! Oftentimes, people say, "No! If I'm fully convinced of this point, you need to be fully convinced on this point with me." That's not true. What Christians must be fully convinced on are what Paul has already taught in Romans: the glory of God being supreme, the nature of Jesus and his sacrifice for sinner, the authority of God's Truth, the vital importance of growing in godliness. Things like these. Outside of this, we recognize we're all in process, and if God is patient towards us, we ought to be patient towards one another. We can be fully convinced and be unified. So, because Jesus is Lord, we must study the Word to grow in our understanding. Because he's Lord, we also ought to be a people who

Give thanks to God. Study and give thanks. Remember that in Romans 1, Paul says that humans are born sinful – meaning that we love us and the things around us to the level of God. This is expressed in the fact that people do not give thanks to God.

In verse 6, Paul changes the illustration to food issues. Again, within the Judaistic system, there were food laws. Yet, clearly these Christians weren't saying these food laws were to the level of salvation – otherwise Paul would have spoken more firmly. Instead, Paul says that these Christians still give thanks to God. And, the people who don't follow those rules also give thanks to God. By the way, this phrase

doesn't mean that the abstainers are saying, "Lord, thank you that I'm abstaining." The idea is that they're grateful to God for all that he is and all that he does and all that he gives. It's, I believe, an all-encompassing term.

If we are a people who study the Word and are grateful people to the Lord, then we will have a gracious mentality towards each other. The person who is strong in the faith, instead of looking down on the weak, will have hope for the weaker person that the Lord will grow them, too. Just as God taught them, he'll teach his other children in his timing. If someone is weak but grateful to the Lord, they will also be able to rejoice with the stronger brother – even though they know in their conscience they cannot do that thing yet. But the point is not that the stronger submit to the weaker. The point is that both the weaker and the stronger are worshipping the Lord!

So, because Jesus is Lord, we can have a transformational love that welcomes believers in the midst of differing viewpoints. As a result, we study the Word and grow in gratitude for the Lord's mercies and graces towards us! Paul then moves into another point in verses 10-12. We welcome fellow believers in the midst of differing viewpoints because

2. We confess God is our judge (vv. 10-12).

Let's start with verse 12: ¹² So then each of us will give an account of himself to God. ⁵ When I hear these words, I think of this with fear. "Each individual person will give an account to God." Oh, ok. I know I'm a sinner. I know I'm weak. I know I have failings. What right do I have to condemn or despise someone else?! No right.

And, while in some ways, Paul might be alluding to this, he takes us to a different conclusion. When he says that God is our judge, he's not trying to motivate by fear or shame. Instead, he's seeking to motivate by grace. I'll explain this in a moment, but let me simply say that Paul's conclusion here is to say that God is the judge over all. There is going to be no point in time when in the final judgment, God asks you to sit on his throne because he's just too tired or he's too perplexed on a certain situation. No. God's judgment is perfect and he always does what is just and best.

Christians, would you affirm that God's judgment is just and best? Ok, then wait 'til you here what Paul says is going to happen when he judges Christians! This future judgment must shape how we relate to each other in our own differences, giving us a transformational love towards one another. So, let's read the end of verse 10 through 11 together: 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." ⁶

There are two points. The end of verse 10 has a "for" and then verse 11 starts with a "for." These are two points Paul is emphasizing. So, the first is that God makes us stand in the judgment. When we read this in English, we might simply have a picture in our mind of us standing before the judgment seat of God. However, to stand before the judgment seat of God, I believe, has more significance. To stand in God's presence means that we are secure, unashamed, forgiven, cleared, declared not guilty. We are accepted. We don't cower at the judgment seat. We're not like Adam and Eve who sewed fig leaves and

⁵ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 14:12.

⁶ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 14:10–11.

hid. We're not like David who didn't talk to God until confronted. No! We *stand* at the judgment seat of God.

How can this be? All because of Jesus. We don't stand because we had such great behavior and we were perfect. Even in our best works, they're still tainted by sin. The apostle John says that if we say we have no sin, we lie. David said that if God would mark all our iniquities, who could stand? No one could stand. So, how can we stand? Because Jesus had no iniquities. The sinless Savior came to this world and died and rose again in the place of sinners. No matter how strong or weak you think you are. No matter how much you understand of the Bible or how little, what matters is the One in whom you place your faith: Jesus. He has done it all. Therefore, God makes us stand in the judgment.

Paul is saying that both the weak and strong will stand in the judgment. Therefore, look at the beginning of verse 10: Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? ⁷ In verse 3, Paul teaches us that it's the weak who judges and the strong who despise. This doesn't mean that the strong never judge and the weak never despise. But by making this distinction, Paul's revealing he's speaking to both people groups here in verse 10. **Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Why do you despise your brother?** Since God is going to make your brother and sister stand in the judgment, why are you hindering them on their way to that future day? God, your Father, makes them stand! Your judging and despising and contradicting God the Father's plan for them!

Ventura, let's be careful how we speak and act towards fellow Christians. In this chapter, Paul brings up the idea of Christians being "brothers" – remind us that we're family! We ought to "get along" and love each other - even when we disagree with them. Let's be careful not to embrace a condemning and despising attitude. Transformational love seeks their welfare and growth – and it is patient towards them because God is patient and loving towards them and us!

Paul's second point is in verse 11. It's a quotation of what will happen in the future day, drawn from Isaiah: ¹¹ for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." ⁸ We've heard this statement in Philippians. But the Old Testament context is saying that there will be a day when there's a remnant of people who will bow and confess to God. Meaning, there will be a remnant of people who will be genuine followers of the Lord. Even though the world is broken and dying, God is saving a people – and someday, we will see them all together. God will make them all stand, and then they will all bow and confess allegiance to God.

Paul is so confident in the faith of the weak and strong that he says, "This is your future!" Now, if you all will confess God then, why are we judging whether or not someone is confessing today? Instead of looking down on one another, we should desire to love and help one another grow – recognizing that we need growth, too! Let's link arms together until we make it to Heaven's shores!

One of very helpful example that I can think of between Christians who disagreed and loved one another is between George Whitfield and John Wesley. Whitfield was an evangelist and a Calvinist. Wesley was an evangelist and an Arminian. Yet, both were Methodists. How could they be friends? About 100 years after Wesley, Spurgeon spoke of Wesley, stating his ardent disagreement with Wesley. Yet, Spurgeon also said that he was convinced that if there were a 13th disciple, it would be Wesley. How could

⁷ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 14:10.

⁸ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 14:11.

Spurgeon say that? Because Spurgeon knew Wesley trusted Jesus. He was a frail, weak vessel; but Spurgeon would also confess that he himself was a frail, weak vessel.

Aren't we all? Yet, **as frail, weak vessels who still sin, we have confidence that Jesus is our Lord and that God is our judge who will make us stand in the judgment.** Ventura, all of this applies to us here – and with believers around the world. **We here, have been privileged to be able to *pursue Jesus together.* And someday, because of God welcoming us, our voices will declare in unison that God is *our* God and our knees will bow in homage to him – but not only Ventura, all believers throughout all time. As a result, let's live today with transformational love towards one another. Don't despise. Don't condemn. Instead, grow in the Word together and grow in worshipful gratitude to the Lord together – revealing the great and kind rule of God.**

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