



ROMANS Part 124

Chapter 14:4-6

How to not judge the infirm in faith.



Who are you who are judging Another's domestic? To his own Master he is standing or falling. Now he will be made to stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand. 5 One, indeed, is deciding for one day rather than another day, yet one is deciding for every day. Let each one be fully assured in his own mind. 6 He who is disposed to the day, is disposed to it to the Lord; and he who is eating, is eating to the Lord, for he is thanking God. And he who is not eating, to the Lord is not eating, and is thanking God.

This word “domestic” in verse four is just what you might think it is: a household servant. Note the capital “a” on “Another.” All of us in the body of Christ are *God's* servants in His own household. He employs each of us as He sees fit. Some domestics educate the children, some cook the food, some press the master's clothes, others clean the garage. It doesn't matter. How honored all of us should be to even occupy the household of the Most High God.

Paul assumes here that the folks squabbling over what to eat or what days to observe are already members of the body of Christ, for Christ is spoken of as “Master.” This is not an argument about teaching, but about scruples. This isn't about sin and death and resurrection, but about hamburgers and romaine lettuce and what time the Sabbath starts—or doesn't. Anyone using this passage to insist that one needn't believe any specific thing (concerning sin and death and resurrection) in order to be in the body of Christ, misuses the passage. Paul's evangel consists of truth (as opposed to error) having to do with a) the death of Jesus Christ, b) the death of Jesus Christ *for sin*, and c) the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). This passage of Romans is not an invitation to doctrinal anarchy.

HERE COMES THE JUDGE

“Judging” speaks of entertaining a condescending attitude toward someone you deem to be a lesser person than yourself. If you're the dude cleaning the garage and you think concerning the clothes-presser, “Who does she think *she* is?,” then Paul would have a word with you. If you're the clothes-presser and you think of the garage cleaner, “What a poor, lazy slob,” Paul would say, “*Somebody* has to clean the garage.”

Not that the topic here is physical assignments in the body of Christ. I'm only using this as an illustration, but the illustration (based on the concept of a domestic)

makes this subject easier to understand. Paul's main topic is not tasks assigned by God to various members of the ecclesia, but the degree of squeamishness some members have concerning freedoms in Christ.

GOD HATES EQUALITY

God not only assigns tasks in the body of Christ, but He assigns degrees of squeamishness. God Himself makes some people strong of faith and others weak. He, Himself, makes one person obsess over observing the Sabbath, while another obsesses over not observing it. One member of Christ's body believes that all things are fine to eat, the other swears off meat, shellfish, or something else.

Why in the world would God put so many variously-squeamished people in the body of Christ? You may as well ask why God makes males and females so different and then tells them, "Live happily ever after." God wants to build our characters. He does this through trials and the contrasts within these trials.

I have told you many times that God hates equality. He is the Creator of both the low pressure and the high pressure air mass (just as He is the Creator of both good and evil—Isaiah 45:7), and also of the opposite ends of the magnetic poles. Without the disparity of atmospheric pressure, there would be no movement of air to suggest, in the natural world, the insistence of God's spirit. (Where does God show up? In the whirlwind—Job 38:1). No one could even blow through a saxophone, for that matter; so much for John Coltrane.

Without opposing poles, the electric motor in my fan would become as practical as a paperweight. The poles of the motor—the negative and positive pulls of nature, each a beautiful thing in its own right—would have attained the



Photo credit: bunky's pickle; <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>

dubious goal of equality, at which time no work would be accomplished and I would die of heat stroke here in South Florida. (Nice job, poles.)

To *function* requires inequality; I'm pretty sure that function requires movement. Doesn't function imply contribution toward a goal? And don't goals invite—even require—aspirants to press *toward* them? All of this speaks of movement, which in both nature and in human relationships requires inequality.

NICE TO BE NICE TO THE NICE

I have often joked that my role in the body of Christ is to give other members of the body an opportunity to exercise grace. I'm serious. If I offend someone (I rarely if ever do it on purpose), I supply to that person an opportunity to be charitable toward me. If there were no jerks in the world, there would be no possibility of being nice to a jerk—an exercise which scores great points with the God, Who invented jerks. Anyone can be nice to a nice person.



I'll always remember a great line from the Mary Tyler Moore Show; I think that Mary Richards herself uttered it: "It's nice to be nice to the nice." Mary has something there. But what reward is there in heaven for that? How about being nice to the obnoxious? Try this on for size: "It's phenomenal to be pleasant to the unlikable." I would utter this profundity to Ted Baxter in the newsroom and not even care whether I were overhead by Lou Grant himself.

If there were no weak members in the body of Christ, how could the strong show them patience? And if there were no strong members, how could the weak have people to despise for their "sinfulness" and then eventually graduate from this indignant judgmentalism into something with far fewer syllables, such as "amity"?

"Now he will be made to stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand" (Romans 14:4).

"APART FROM HUMAN COMPETENCE"

Just look at this. I'm pretty sure that the "he" here refers to the weak of faith because, in my mind, the strong of

faith are already standing. The strong are wobbly only in the minds of the weak. The main point is that God is able to make the weak stand, and He will do it. This becomes, then, a showcase for God's ability and not for the human's. Here is another purpose of inequality: God gets to show off. What could be more dissimilar than God's ability and ours? But without our inability, God lacks opportunity to exhibit His power. This is why Adam precedes Christ. Aren't Adam and Christ as opposite as can be? What does Adam do besides provide Christ an opportunity to show off? A better way to put it is that Adam provides a necessary field of sin and death against which God performs the magnificent feat of righteousness and resurrection through Christ, both of which (righteousness and resurrection) come from His spirit, apart from human competence.

LET'S BE MATURE;
IN THE MEANTIME, HOWEVER...

“One indeed, is deciding for one day rather than another day, yet one is deciding for every day. Let each one be fully assured in his own mind. He who is disposed to the day, is disposed to it to the Lord; and he who is eating, is eating to the Lord, for he is thanking God. And he who is not eating, to the Lord is not eating, and is thanking God” (Romans 14:5-6).

This is Paul exercising delicacy. Here, in this section of Romans, Paul unfolds a kinder, gentler love, guiding believers into the proper attitude toward other believers. In the book of Colossians, on the other hand, Paul *teaches* concerning the recognition of days, condemning such a practice as opposing the sufficiency Christ. In Romans 14, Paul shares from his heart how to get along with believers of every maturity level. In Colossians, Paul dictates from his mind concerning *all* such human observations, the lot of which mock a crucified Christ. Here in Romans 14, Paul addresses a group of believers meeting in the home of Priscilla and Aquila (Romans 16:3-5) who may disagree about many different habits. In Colossians, Paul addresses the believers of the Phrygian city of Colosse almost by accident, primarily writing for the eons of time, considering no human but Christ, acknowledging no matter but truth.

Colossians 2:12-19—

Being entombed together with Him in baptism, in Whom you were roused together also through faith in the operation of God, Who rouses Him from among the dead, you also being dead to the offenses and the uncircumci-

sion of your flesh, He vivifies us together jointly with Him, dealing graciously with all our offenses, erasing the handwriting of the decrees against us, which was hostile to us, and has taken it away out of the midst, nailing it to the cross, stripping off the sovereignties and authorities, with boldness He makes a show of them, triumphing over them in it.

Let no one, *then*, be judging you in food or in drink or in the particulars of a festival, or of a new moon, or of sabbaths, which are a shadow of those things which are impending—yet the body is the Christ's. Let no one be arbitrating against you, who wants, in humility and the ritual of the messengers, to parade what he has seen, feignedly, puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding the Head, out of Whom the entire body, being supplied and united through the assimilation and ligaments, is growing in the growth of God.



Paul spares no human feelings concerning those who would recognize special foods, drinks, new moons, or Sabbaths, and then lord it over others. I think that, in Paul's opinion, those who arbitrate against a stronger brother and sister are, by default, puffed up by a fleshly mind, "not holding the head." Christ is the end of all human ritual. In Romans, chapter 14, Paul lends the weak believer the benefit of the doubt, assuming the believer to at least be assured concerning the day in his or her own mind, and dedicating the observance to the Lord. "I would hope for the best here," Paul might have said to his scribe Tertius. "I would *hope* that the observers of ritual would at least be assured, in their own minds, that Jesus somehow approves of such practices. Otherwise, I'd not hesitate to pass the Colossian letter beneath their noses and tell them, 'Have you seen *this*?'"

Paul would then say to his trusted scribe, “I wish that they would not observe days at all; it generates fightings between the observers and the non-observers.”

In Colossians chapter 2, Paul tells the truth about the observance of days. He would push every believer toward maturity and away from “props” that serve only to insult completeness and maturity in Christ. In Romans, chapter 14, Paul assumes a gathering of folks whose beliefs are at least temporarily in place (the immaturity among them can come to maturity later) and who are now mingling at the home of Aquila on Thursday night; no one wants a fistfight at the snack table over observance or non-observance of the Sabbath.

Paul’s ultimate goal is to present every believer mature in Christ. Here is Colossians 1:24-29—

I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for you, and am filling up in my flesh, in His stead, the deficiencies of the afflictions of Christ, for His body, which is the

ecclesia of which I became a dispenser, in accord with the administration of God, which is granted to me for you, to complete the word of God—the secret which has been concealed from the eons and from the generations, yet now was made manifest to His saints, to whom God wills to make known what are the glorious riches of this secret among the nations, which is: Christ among you, the expectation of glory—Whom we are announcing, admonishing every human and teaching every human in all wisdom, *that we should be presenting every human mature in Christ Jesus*; for which I am toiling also, struggling in accord with His operation, which is operating in me with power.

In the meantime, why not cut the immature some slack. Not everyone attains maturity at once, but the growth of the body of Christ occurs in the growth of God (Colossians 2:19), and thus at *God’s* pace—not at the pace desired by the apostle, or by us. The acceptance of each individual’s pace of growth is, in itself, maturity.

To those striving for maturity, let us not neglect our path simply because others aren’t on it. On the other hand, don’t make maturity a pulpit from which to despise any saint still on the way. Addressing the weaker brother or sister: God places no premium on the observance of days, the performance of rituals, or the abstinence from things which God has declared “clean.” Greater is faith than sight. Do not find yourself boasting in that which, at worst, betrays the false humility of a fleshly mind, and at best becomes a crutch with which to prop up Christ—though it be sincerely believed.

Let us all hold the head, which is Christ. Or at least let us steer for it while continuing to not kill each other.

—MZ (*To be continued.*)

POSTSCRIPT

Psalm 46:1-3

For the Sons of Korah Concerning the Eons; A Song: Elohim is our Refuge and Strength, A very providing Help in distresses. Therefore, we shall not fear when the earth is made to change, Or when the mountains slide into the heart of the seas. Its waters clamor; they foam; The mountains quake at its swelling.

Produced by Martin Zender/www.martinzender.com
© 2017 by Martin Zender/Published by Starke & Hartmann, Inc.
email: mzender@martinzender.com

