

Sacred Worth Study
Romans 14
September 5, 2021

So for the past few weeks we have been leaning on the work of Colby Marin in Unblobber to try to get at the complexity of these passages in the Bible that inform, or fail to inform how we get at the question of what the Bible says about LGBTQ people. So far, some things I have heard from you is having the same scrutiny for people, the importance of fidelity and mutuality, and reading these passages in the light of Jesus's obsession with loving people that the religious leaders say are not worthy of love.

But, we have to move past that and realize that many good meaning Christians come to different conclusions about this issue. They may not be ready to listen to these honestly puzzling passages. Or they may have a different norming norm through which they interpret scripture. Do we interpret the Bible through, love is the fulfillment of the law, the prophet's call for economic justice, or by being a holy people who are unlike the surrounding culture? We can easily end up in what I like to call, a Jew and Gentile situation where our worldviews are so different it can be hard to even talk to one another.

Here we have Paul discussing eating culture, which is central to the Jewish faith that Paul is a member of. I cannot stress enough, this is one of the central tenets of the holiness culture of the time, where Jews had practices that separated themselves from Gentiles. Here holiness means to be set apart. Set apart for being God's people. Set apart to be different from surrounding cultures. The only thing more important than this is the shema, the Lord your God the Lord is one. Or maybe a few of the ten commandments.

So here we have the weak in faith who eat only vegetables and the strong who believe in eating everything.

Who could Paul be talking about?

Believe me, I've tried to figure out which are Jews and which are gentiles. Is Paul referring to eating meat not sacrificed to idols? Jewish kosher? Or pagan vegetarianism? Honestly I do not think it matters who we label, but to note that there are two sides. If we take on the other examples, one day better than the other is probably the sabbath. But regardless, Paul here does not take a side. One side is saying, but here the Bible says that we must do it this way, and the other side interprets it differently and Paul has no interest in correcting people. Here we have two practices, eating vegetables and eating anything. I'm not sure which is the biblical way, but Paul is telling that in Jesus, there is a freedom to both follow the Bible and follow the Bible differently.

Do we have any questions about what the conflict is?
What does this say about what it means to be Christian?
Any other ideas about what Paul could be getting at?

The key point is that why are we passing judgment on one another, because we know ultimately we are accountable to God.

How does this verse free us and how does it bind us?

So to the person who believes that we should be affirmative, I say to them. Good, you are accountable to God for that decision and God will judge you. So welcome in and affirm whoever you wish for I am persuaded that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. So to the person who welcomes, but does not affirm I say. Good, you are accountable to God for that decision and God will judge you. So you are free to welcome and not affirm, you are free to follow what you see as the Bible. Let the affirmative people not injure the Bible followers by what they believe.

When we are together let us be under the law of both peoples. But when we are apart, we should all be free to practice the convictions of our own minds. Those who are affirmative must not despise those who are Bible followers and those who are bible followers must not passage judgment on those who are affirmative; for God has welcomed them.

I also want to stress how Paul couches this language in the stumbling block. I think that he is worried about the church in Rome splitting apart, and part of why he is arguing this way is because this may be a 50/50 kind of argument where both sides feel very passionate about their biblical interpretations. He literally says, do not let what you eat cause ruin of one for whom Christ died.

What place does Judgment have in our Christian witness?

How can judgment be toxic to Christian fellowship?

But I don't think that we are done here. Let's look at the second paragraph after verse 13. Nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. The one who thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and has human approval.

What could this be talking about?

For me this verse tells me that how important our beliefs are. In a way, this sounds a little like an interpretation needs to be popular. But really, it gives us Christians the responsibility to figure a

lot of this stuff out ourselves. We have the responsibility to bind and loose. And our perceptions play a large role in how we interpret things.

For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

What really matters in our Christian walk?

These past few weeks we have talked about something that only has a few Bible verses attached to it. We've been trying to figure out something for which there may not be a simple answer.

We disagree about many things. We disagree about vaccination, about what songs to sing, about what books of the Bible to study, about how exactly the Bible is an authority for our lives, about how to do leadership, about so many many things. I hope that by talking about this openly and honestly we might be able to find a way to be one church together. A church where both services can share their truth to one another. I believe we have a Jew and Gentile problem here in this church, and that just like they were able to work it out, we too will be able to rise to the occasion.

I have a few more verses that need to be talked about a little bit. They are the four verses about how God made humans male and female and marriage is meant to bring them together.

Genesis 1:27; So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

· Genesis 2: 24, preceded by Eve being created as the answer for man to have a helper; For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

· Matthew 19:4-6; "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'?" So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

· Mark 10: 6 – 9; "But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.' 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

Here we have two verses about the creation of the world and two verses about divorce. These will come up in any debate about what marriage means. And I really do not have any arguments or issues with these verses. Marriage is important and should be respected. The question is how far do we take this passage? Are these passages that limit our understanding of marriage? Or is this a distraction from what the point of these passages were, to say how marriage is rooted in the idea of mutuality and should not be casually tossed aside.

But it is also important to note that there have been many different kinds of marriage in the Bible. Polygamy, having many mistresses/concubines, we also have singleness celebrated as well. The problem is that if we argue, the Bible is our blueprint for marriage, then we can get ourselves in trouble because we're dealing with a different culture, which had different ideas of what marriage was. Mostly a thing for producing children and an economic union.

So where do we go from here?

I have gone through a lot of Biblical passages. I have taught you a lot of what I know. We could go through book studies? Talk about these issues in round-tables. Or do something else.

I would rather release this 11am time slot so that you all can do what you chose to do! But I would love to hear what you all want from me.