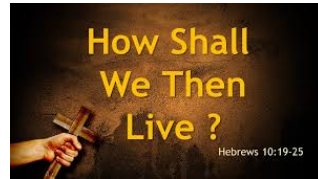


“How Shall We Then Live?”

Part 8: “Preserving Unity When Christians Disagree”

Romans 14:1-23, 15:1-7



Introduction: Two preliminary thoughts...

1. We must realize how important unity is to Christ.

John 17:20-21

Ephesians 4:3, “...eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

2. In Romans 14 Paul is teaching us how to handle disagreements over nonessential matters.

1 Corinthians 15:3

First level doctrines: essential to our faith

Second level doctrines: essential for a church body to be unified

Third level doctrines: nonessential

Biblical unity does not come from minimizing doctrine; it comes from agreeing on essential doctrine.

In nonessential matters, we must welcome our brothers and sisters who disagree.

I. Esteem One Another and Be Charitable

To be weak in faith means a believer does not have confidence to engage in a particular activity without feeling guilty.

To be strong in faith means a believer does have confidence to engage in a particular activity without feeling guilty.

Philippians 2:3

Legalism is when we take our own personal standards and convictions — that are not Biblical — and elevate them to the same level as Scripture, and then congratulate ourselves on our strict adherence while judging others for not conforming.

Matthew 15:1-9

Whatever convictions we come to on nonessential matters, our motivation ought to be to honor the Lord, for we are no longer our own!

2 Corinthians 5:15, “...*he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.*”

2 Corinthians 5:10

The thought of our future judgment ought to motivate us to treat one another right.

II. Walk in Love

A “stumbling-block” refers to something left out carelessly over which someone stumbles.

A “hindrance” means something deliberately left to ensnare another person.

We all grow to maturity at different rates. We must respect this fact and not try to hurry or harass anyone along.

To walk in love towards one another is to understand these truths and to be careful about the spiritual well-being of your brothers and sisters in Christ.

III. Follow the Example of Christ

Matthew 19:11, “...*a friend of tax collectors and sinners!*”

Sharing a meal carried great significance; it signaled fellowship and acceptance.

In nonessential matters, we must welcome our brothers and sisters who disagree, because we have been welcomed by Christ.

“In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; in all things, charity.”