

Sam Storms

Enjoying God Ministries

Romans #55

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The Weak, the Strong, and the Challenge of Christian Liberty

Romans 14:1-12

One of the foundational pillars on which Bridgeway Church is built is the divine inspiration and absolute authority of Holy Scripture. To put it bluntly: when the Bible speaks, we listen. But what should the Christian do when the Bible does *not* speak? Every issue on which the Bible does speak, it speaks infallibly. But the Bible does not speak on every issue. It is not an encyclopedia of ethics. What, then, are we to do when issues arise on which the Bible remains silent? How is a Christian to act on matters not directly addressed in Scripture, especially when they cause conflict and division in the church? That is what Romans 14 is all about.

The question we are faced with could be phrased in yet another way. We could just as easily ask: What is the nature and extent of Christian liberty in regard to *matters not explicitly addressed in Scripture*? Christian liberty or freedom is a massively important topic. For example, the Bible often speaks of *freedom from the condemnation of God*. We saw this in Romans 8:1 where Paul declared that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. There is also the *freedom from the compulsion to sin*. Paul addressed this in Romans 6-8 where he explained that by the power of the Holy Spirit living within us, we no longer have to sin. Christians now have the power not to sin. We are no longer compelled to do so. But the subject addressed in Romans 14 concerns yet another dimension of Christian freedom, namely, *freedom from the conscience of other Christians*. Now, what does that mean?

To answer that question, we must recognize that there is a vast number of issues in our day, as well as in Paul's day, to which the Bible does not supply an explicit "Yes" or "No." They are issues that do not affect our status as God's children. They do not pertain to whether or not one is saved or lost. They are what might be called secondary, as over against primary, issues.

For example, the Bible does not explicitly say, "Thou shalt not attend movies rated R." It does not explicitly say, "Thou shalt not eat meat." Although the Bible does say, "Don't ever become intoxicated," it does not say, "You are forbidden from drinking any and all alcoholic beverages." The Bible simply does not address the question of whether or not it is permissible to mow your lawn on Sunday or whether you should bring coffee into a church service, or whether you should or should not get a tattoo. You may wish it were otherwise, but the Bible does not give us explicit instructions on whether we should work at a job on Sunday or purchase life insurance or which Bible translation we must use.

Although Christians have strong opinions on how to raise their children, the Bible doesn't tell us whether we should put our kids in public schools, private schools, or educate them at home. The Bible encourages modesty in dress. Both male and female are to be careful not to dress in a way that flaunts their sexuality or is unnecessarily ostentatious and seductive. But we have no right to condemn others for their wearing of colorful clothing or the use of makeup or a particular hairstyle. The Scriptures don't give us explicit instructions on whether or not we should attend a Good Friday service every year in conjunction with our celebration of the death and resurrection of Jesus on Easter Sunday.

You may not be aware of this, but many of the Puritans in the 17th and 18th centuries objected to the giving and receiving of wedding rings. This is never addressed in Scripture and the Christian should follow his/her conscience in a matter like this.

These, and countless other activities, are what we might call matters of conscience. They fall within the domain of Christian freedom. Sadly, though, some Christians insist on elevating such matters to the status of divine law.

Here's what I mean by that. There are professing Christian people, who are determined to bring you under their religious thumb. They are bent on making you a slave of their conscience. They have built a tidy religious box, without biblical justification, and strive to stuff you inside and make you conform to its dimensions. They are *legalists*, and their tools are guilt, fear, intimidation, and self-righteousness. They proclaim God's unconditional love for you, but insist on certain conditions before including you among the accepted, among the approved elite, among God's favored few.

I'm not talking about people who insist you obey certain laws or moral rules in order to be saved. Such people aren't legalists. They are lost! They are easily identified and rebuffed. I'm talking about Christian legalists whose goal is to enforce conformity among other Christians in accordance with their personal preferences. These are *life-style legalists*. They threaten to rob you of joy and to squeeze the intimacy out of your relationship with Jesus. They may even lead you to doubt your salvation. They heap condemnation and contempt on your head so that your life is controlled and energized by fear rather than freedom and joy and delight in God.

Rarely would these folk ever admit to any of this. They don't perceive or portray themselves as legalists. They'd never introduce themselves: "Hi! My name is Joe/Julie. I'm a legalist and my goal is to steal your joy and keep you in bondage to my religious prejudices. Would you like to go to lunch after church today and let me tell you all the things you're doing wrong?"

I suspect that some of you are either lifestyle legalists or, more likely, the victims of it. You live in fear of doing something that another Christian considers unholy, even though the Bible is silent on the subject. You are terrified of incurring their disapproval, disdain, and ultimate rejection. Worse still, you fear God's rejection for violating religious traditions or cultural norms that have no basis in Scripture but are prized by the legalist. You have been duped into believing that the slightest misstep or mistake will bring down God's disapproval and disgust.

When you are around other Christians, whether on a Sunday or in a community group or just hanging out, do you feel free? Does your spirit feel relaxed or oppressed? Do you sense their acceptance or condemnation? Do you feel judged, inadequate, inferior, guilty, immature, all because of your perceived failure to conform to what someone else regards as “holy”? Jesus wants to set you free from such bondage! As Paul said, “you were called to freedom” (Gal. 5:13)!

Defining Legalism

We need to carefully define legalism, primarily because the question will soon come up: Are those whom Paul refers to as “weak” in Romans 14 legalists?

Legalism has been defined in a number of ways, but here is my attempt. ***Legalism is the tendency to regard as divine law things which God has neither required nor forbidden in Scripture and the corresponding inclination to look with suspicion on others for their failure or refusal to conform.*** One could also call this a “religious” spirit, insofar as religion and legalism go hand in hand. It all comes down to this: I create rules and expectations not found in the Bible and then feel good about myself and my relationship with God for having obeyed them, all the while I judge others for having failed to live up to this artificial standard of man-made godliness.

Primary vs. Secondary Issues in Romans 14

Someone may be inclined to ask the question: “Sam, how do we know that Paul is dealing with secondary issues in Romans 14? How do we know that he is not dealing with issues pertaining to our salvation?” There are several answers to this question.

First, according to v. 3. ***“God has welcomed him.”*** In other words, since God has accepted the believer irrespective of his/her opinion on such matters, so must we. Since God receives into fellowship with himself people on both sides of the issue, the issue clearly does not determine whether or not someone is saved.

Second, Paul's plea for ***tolerance*** also indicates that he is addressing matters not relevant to justification. He pleads for mutual acceptance. If anyone in Romans 14 had been insisting that a particular custom must be observed in order for one to be saved, Paul would have severely denounced them, as he does in Galatians 1:6-10; 3:1-3; and Colossians 2:20,23. Why the difference? Because in Galatians Paul is dealing with the Judaizers who were perverting the gospel by adding to faith in Jesus certain religious conditions, such as circumcision and observing the Sabbath. In Colossians the form of legalism was ascetic in nature and threatened to undermine the preeminence and uniqueness of Christ. But in Romans 14 Paul's tolerance and sympathetic gentleness indicate that the so-called “weak” brother or sister was not abstaining from meat and wine in order to earn a status of righteousness before God, but because they felt sincerely, albeit mistakenly, that it was only if they did so that they could walk in obedience to God and avoid the sort of moral contamination that might jeopardize their spiritual growth.

Third, Paul's counsel in v. 5b that each one should "***be fully convinced in his own mind***" indicates that he is addressing issues on which God has not spoken. In other words, he calls on each believer to evaluate, think, reason, and ***make up your own mind*** as to how you should behave. If one's eternal status before God were at stake, Paul would never have issued such advice.

This exhortation in v. 5 is actually quite surprising. It would appear to make matters worse rather than better. This is a command, not a concession. Evidently Paul didn't believe the solution to the divisions that arise in the church is compromise or weak-mindedness. Instead, he says that each of us should hold firmly to our convictions. He doesn't recommend sitting on the fence or being fuzzy in what you believe. Come to a conviction and take your stand on it! Indecisiveness, vacillation, wavering, and uncertainty are not the solution! Paul's answer to the problem is that each of us should have firm convictions. Simply put, this command "prohibits intellectual laziness" (Doriani, 484). Don't be angry or dogmatic or quarrelsome, but neither should you be afraid of taking a stand.

Paul would never have said this if primary or foundational doctrines were at stake. He would never say, "Well, some of you believe Jesus is God incarnate and some of you don't. Each of you should make up your own mind and learn to get along with differing opinions." No! Paul is articulating principles to guide the believer in his/her dealings with other believers when they face ethical decisions not directly addressed in Scripture. These are issues which God has neither commanded nor forbidden. These are matters of individual ***conscience***. These are not issues such as theft, lying, sexual relations or other such matters on which the Bible gives clear guidance.

One more thing. Paul's words here make it clear that you should not embrace a certain belief on secondary issues because "that's what Sam believes" or because "that's what Michael believes" or because "that's what my parents taught me." Paul is clear: Make up *your own* mind!

Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8-10

Many believe that Paul is addressing the same issue in both Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8-10. In Corinth, much of the meat being sold for consumption by the public had come from animals sacrificed or consecrated to pagan idols. Two groups emerged in the church over the propriety of buying and eating such meat. One group, probably the majority, knew that "an idol has no real existence" (1 Cor. 8:4) and that the meat was neither better nor worse for its association with the pagan deity. Therefore, they entertained no scruples about eating the meat. The other group, not possessing such knowledge, believed that to eat the meat was to participate in idolatry. They believed the meat had somehow become *infected* by its association with pagan idolatry. F. F. Bruce explains:

"In giving his judgment to the Corinthians on this question, Paul ranges himself on the one hand with those who knew that there was no substance in the pagan deities, and that a Christian was at perfect liberty to eat meat of this kind. But knowledge was not everything; the claims of love were to be considered. He himself was prepared to forego his liberty if by insisting on it he would set a harmful example to a fellow-Christian with a weaker conscience. If a Christian who thought

the eating of idol meat was wrong was encouraged by the example of his [more robust] brother to eat some, the resultant damage to his conscience would be debited to the other's lack of charity and consideration" (249).

Whereas the principles to which Paul appeals in resolving both problems appear to be similar, if not identical, the circumstances evoking the problem differ in three respects: (1) In Romans 14 there is no mention of food or drink *offered to idols*; (2) The observance of certain *days* as special is in Romans 14 but not in 1 Corinthians 8-10; and (3) The weakness of Romans 14 involved a *vegetarian* diet, i.e., a scrupulous attitude toward *all* meat, whereas in 1 Corinthians there is no reason to doubt that the weak would have eaten meat *not* offered to idols.

But let us remember again that Paul is not talking about issues on which the Bible explicitly and directly speaks. He is not saying that you are free to commit fornication, whether before marriage or outside of it. He is not saying you have freedom either to steal or not steal, to lie or not lie. Paul is dealing with issues on which the Bible makes no explicit comment, issues that fall within the realm of the believer's conscience.

Who is the "weak" and Who is the "strong"?

The first question to be addressed is: Who is the **"weak"** brother or sister (v. 1)? Or again, "What constitutes weakness and strength?" More important still, is the "weak" believer a legalist? Paul tells us three things about the "weak" brother or sister:

(1) He/she is a *vegetarian* (vv. 2,21). Stop right there! He is not saying that it is a sign of weakness if you choose to be a vegetarian for health reasons. Some are vegetarians because of what they perceive to be the inhumane treatment of animals at industrial farms. That is a perfectly legitimate option for the Christian. Rather, Paul is talking about the person who abstains from all meat because he/she believes that to eat meat is to fall or lapse in one's relationship with and commitment to Christ. Eating meat, they argued, was morally and spiritually dangerous.

(2) He/she regards some days, probably Sunday, as having special importance (v. 5).

(3) He/she does not drink wine (or any other form of intoxicating beverage) (vv. 17,21).

The weak brother, the weak sister, then, is ***the one who entertains scruples on secondary matters***. This person has misgivings about the moral and spiritual propriety of such practices. The weak brother or sister is the one who has not sufficiently understood the truth as expressed in these texts:

“For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer” (1 Tim. 4:4-5).

Needless to say, when Paul says “nothing” is to be rejected he means “nothing” which the Scriptures do not explicitly say is to be rejected. There are many things in God’s world that are regarded as unclean and should be rejected, such as sexual immorality and drunkenness and yes, eating squash!

“Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience. ‘For the earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof’” (1 Cor. 10:25-26).

“I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself [except for squash!], but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean” (Rom. 14:14).

Weakness in faith, therefore, is *not* a failure to believe the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. It is, rather, a failure to understand the implications of such doctrine in the area of practical freedom. The weak believer has failed to grasp the truth of 1 Corinthians 8:8,

“Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do” (1 Cor. 8:8; cf. Mark 7:14-15).

Again, Paul’s criticism of the mindset of the “weak” isn’t because they rejected some fundamental Christian doctrine. Rather it is because of their lack of insight into some of the implications of their faith in Jesus Christ, specifically the issue of freedom when it comes to eating and drinking and observance of some days of the week as more special and more holy than others. Paul spoke of such believers as *weak* for other reasons as well:

(1) They feared that by partaking of certain foods and drink or participating in certain practices they would be *spiritually infected* in some way.

(2) They believed that partaking would weaken them in their walk and expose them to even greater evils.

(3) They believed that there was spiritual value or moral virtue in *abstinence* per se. To deny oneself is inherently good and to indulge oneself is inherently bad.

(4) The “weak” believer is more timid than others in the way they think God has called them to live. They are more inclined to yield to pressure from other believers. They were frightened of being held in contempt by other believers. They were fearful of ridicule from others, based on whether or not they

participated in certain practices or partook of certain foods and beverages. They lacked the sort of confident freedom in life that God designed us to experience as his children.

It is important to note a major misconception about the nature of weakness, as Paul conceives it. Many have understood *weakness* to be synonymous with *excess*. The weak brother, so some have thought, is the one who can't restrain himself and is given to over-indulgence in such matters as eating and drinking. We look at a person who drinks or smokes excessively and say, "Oh, my. He is really weak. He can't control his urges and desires. He lacks the strength to say No and falls into excess." That may be true, but that is *not* what Paul is talking about. That is *not* the meaning of "weak" in this context.

"The weak of Romans 14," explains John Murray, "are not those given to excess. They are the opposite; they are total abstainers from certain articles of food" (260). Those who have a "weakness" that leads to excess or over-indulgence are dealt with in completely other terms. Paul refers to such behavior as *sin*. Drunkards, for example, certainly have a weakness. But it is the sort of weakness that Paul condemns (1 Cor. 6:10). But here in Romans 14 he tells us to "welcome" or accept the one who is weak (v. 1). ***Weakness in Romans 14 is not uncontrolled overindulgence but overly scrupulous abstinence.***

So, once again, please remember that Paul is not talking about people who abstain for ***health reasons***, but people who abstain for ***moral or spiritual reasons*** (as misguided as those reasons may be). Or again, what about the recovering alcoholic? If he or she abstains from alcohol, that is ***not*** a sign of weakness. They abstain because they are susceptible to the addictive nature of alcohol and they want to walk in holiness before the Lord. Don't ever accuse a recovering alcoholic who is a teetotaler of being weak! We must remember that ***abstinence per se is not weakness***. The decisive factor is one's *motive* for abstention. Some of you parents may choose to abstain out of concern for your young children. That is perfectly permissible and is not a sign of weakness on your part.

Not only that, but ***the weak in faith here in Romans 14 are not legalists***. We know this from what Paul says in vv. 5-6. Paul would never say that a legalist honors the Lord or by means of his/her legalism is giving thanks to God. The way you can discern whether or not a "weak" brother or sister is a legalist is by taking note of their ***motivation***. Do they abstain because they think it makes them more holy or closer to God than you? And do they seek to impose this practice on you and hold you in contempt if you don't comply? If so, they are legalists. So, whereas it is certainly possible for a "weak" Christian to fall into legalism, that is not primarily what Paul has in mind here in Romans 14. You'll see why in just a minute.

John Stott concludes: "So if we are trying to picture a weaker brother or sister, we must not envisage a vulnerable Christian easily overcome by temptation, but a sensitive Christian full of indecision and scruples. What the weak lack is not strength of self-control but liberty of conscience" (355). The weak in Rome may well have been *Jewish Christians* whose weakness "consisted in their continuing conscientious commitment to Jewish regulations regarding diet and days" (Stott, 356). Support for this is found in Paul's use of the term *koinos* (v. 14) which means "common"/"unclean". This term "had become a semi-technical way of describing food prohibited under the Mosaic law (Mark 7:2,5; Acts 10:14)" (Moo, 829-30).

What, then, constitutes *strength*? The strong are not those who live wild, carefree, self-indulgent lives, who seek to fulfill whatever desires they may have. They are those who correctly perceive the truth of 1 Timothy 4:4-5 and Romans 14:14a. Paul was strong (cf. 15:1). ***The strong are those who, by reason of their knowledge of God and grace, enjoy the full range of Christian liberty without being condemned in their conscience.*** However, as the rest of Scripture clearly teaches us, there is a difference between being “strong” and being “sinful”! When so-called strength of faith becomes an excuse for excess or unbridled freedom, it is not strength. It is transgression!

How are the strong and the weak to relate and respond to each other in regard to these matters on which they embrace differing convictions?

First, according to v. 1, he is to “welcome” or accept the one who is weak in faith.” Welcome/Accept refers both to recognition of the weak believer by the Christian community as a member of the body of Christ, and brotherly reception of him/her into the routines of Christian fellowship. In other words, don't discriminate against him/her because of their weakness. Show them the same affection and esteem you would a strong brother who shares your convictions on secondary matters. Be sure the weaker brother or sister is not made to feel inferior or unwanted or odd. Though their scruples are held in error, it is not through callous disputes or a critical spirit that their weakness will be turned into strength. And please note that the reason why the strong should accept and welcome the weak is because God has (v. 3)!

Also observe that Paul is careful never to concede to the position of the weak as the correct one. He refuses to reduce the strong to the level of the weak, although he will call on the strong believers to curtail their liberty out of love. The weak, however, *ought* to grow strong. The way to make them strong is not to offend them but to love them.

Second, the strong must not “despise” the weak (v. 3a). The tendency of the strong is to despise or look down their noses at the weak as one not worthy of being taken seriously. But Paul rebukes the smile of disdainful contempt.

To the weak Paul says, do not “pass judgement” on the strong (v. 3b). If the strong smiles disdainfully and in a patronizing way at the weak, the weak frowns with disapproval at the strong. The strong believes the weak is legalistic and Pharisaical. The weak believes the strong is dangerously loose and unprincipled. Both are to refrain from such judgments.

Paul's Counsel to the Weak

Beginning with v. 4 down through v. 12, Paul speaks directly to the weak brother or sister. Beginning in v. 13 and extending through v. 23, he will address the strong. What does Paul tell the weak to do?

First, as we've already seen, the weak should not judge the strong because "God has accepted him" (v. 3b). It is wrong to pass judgment on the strong for the simple fact that God hasn't. If God has received the strong into fellowship, so too must the weak. Let's not pretend to be more holy than God!

Second, the Christian has but one Master, the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 4a). The conscience of a Christian is bound to none but Christ. In matters on which the Bible does not speak, you and I are answerable to none but God. In other words, for the weak to judge the strong on a matter of conscience is intrusive. It is to Christ, not to you, that he stands or falls (v. 4). Simply put, when it comes to secondary matters of conscience, what another brother or sister chooses to do is none of your business!

This standing/falling does not refer to the final judgment, as if one's salvation were in view. Rather, it refers to one's daily Christian walk from which the weak brother is sure the strong brother will stray because of his practice. Paul's point is that "in spite of the perils which liberty brings in its train – and the apostle is as conscious of them as the most timid and scrupulous Christian could be – he is confident that Christian liberty, through the grace and power of Christ, will prove a triumphant moral success" (Denney, 702).

Therefore, although the weak brother may regard the behavior of the strong as a falling down in his devotion to Christ and as something that will surely bring the Lord's disapproval, Paul is quick to argue for the opposite: Christ will sustain him! And the reverse is true.

Third, the reason why neither party should judge the other is that **both are aiming at the same target, namely, serving and glorifying God**. Paul's point in vv. 5-9 is that the *purpose* of both the strong and the weak in all they do is their devotion to God. Whether he eats or abstains, he does so with gratitude to God. Whether we live or die, we live or die *for the Lord*. Whether you hold one day of the week as being more holy than another or view them as equal, you do so to "honor" the Lord (v. 6). Whether you eat meat or not, whether you drink wine in moderation or not, you "give thanks to God" (v. 6).

In other words, the weak man is making his choices on the basis of what he believes will most honor the Lord and in doing so gives thanks to the Lord. They are good, well-motivated choices given his convictions about meat and wine. He evidently believes that those who eat meat and drink wine don't honor the Lord as much as they would if they abstained. Why they believed this about meat and wine, Paul doesn't say explicitly, although he will give us hints in vv. 13-23.

Fourth, and finally, **all**, both the strong and the weak, will give account to **God, not to each other**. I won't answer for you at the judgment seat of God, and you won't answer for me. The emphasis in v. 12 is on the word "each." If this is true, how dare we presume to exercise a judgment that is the prerogative of Christ alone! Paul is not saying that you should close your mind to the suggestions of others on these matters. He is simply saying that we should not yield to the temptation to despise or judge those who differ with us on these sorts of issues.

Conclusion

This issue has the potential to divide Christians and destroy the fellowship and love we are supposed to experience. That is why we must be diligent not to pass judgment on the conscience of another believer unless God in his Word has done so. Otherwise, try to help the weak believer understand the freedom he has in Christ and the joy that comes with it. But don't look down your nose at him/her, for they are seeking to honor God with their lives as much as the strong are.

Is Sunday the Christian Sabbath, or are all days equally Sacred?

In Romans 14:5 Paul says that "one person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike." It seems, then, that the issue of whether or not Sunday was special was also a source of division in the body of Christ. So, is Sunday the Christian Sabbath? Is it special, or all days equally holy?

Observe how Jesus responded to the accusation of the Pharisees that he and his disciples had profaned the Sabbath when they plucked heads of grain to satisfy their hunger (Mark 2:23-28). Matthew's version of the story includes this remarkable declaration by our Lord:

"Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? I tell you, something greater than the temple is here" (Matt. 12:5-6).

Jesus is saying in response to their accusations: "I am greater than David! I am greater than the Temple!" But he doesn't stop there:

"And he said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for man [i.e., for his benefit and spiritual and physical welfare] not man for the Sabbath [the Sabbath has no needs that a human can fulfill]. So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath'" (Mark 2:27-28).

Do you see what Jesus is saying? This isn't primarily a story about finding a loophole in the Sabbath regulations. This isn't primarily about finding precedent in the OT for reaping and eating on the Sabbath. It isn't even primarily about whether or not you can do good by healing a man on the Sabbath.

This is a story about who Jesus is! It is all about Jesus saying to them and to us: I am greater than David. I am the fulfillment of all that David typified. I am greater than the Temple. I am the fulfillment of all that the Temple typified and symbolized. I am greater than the Sabbath. I bring to you a rest and satisfaction that not even the OT Sabbath could provide. In the words of N. T. Wright, "If Jesus is a walking, living, breathing Temple, he is also the walking, celebrating, victorious sabbath" (*Simply Jesus*, 138).

Remember that the Sabbath was instituted by God as a sign of the old covenant with Israel (see Exod. 31:12-13, 16-17). However, as Paul makes clear in Colossians 2:16-17, Jesus is the fulfillment of all that the OT prophesied, prefigured, and foreshadowed: “Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.”

The immediate purpose of the Sabbath in the OT was to provide men and women with physical rest from their physical labors. When Paul says that this Sabbath was a shadow, of which Christ is the substance, he means that *the physical rest provided by the OT Sabbath finds its fulfillment in the spiritual rest provided by Jesus.*

We cease from our labors, not by resting physically one day in seven, but by resting spiritually every day and forever in Christ by faith alone. We experience God’s true Sabbath rest, not by taking off from work one day in seven, but by placing our faith in the saving work of Jesus. To experience God’s Sabbath rest, therefore, is to cease from those works of righteousness by which we were seeking to be justified. *The NT fulfillment of the OT Sabbath is not one day in seven of physical rest, but an eternity of spiritual rest through faith in the work of Christ.*

Physical rest, of course, is still essential. God does not intend for us to work seven days a week. Our bodies and spirits need to experience renewal and refreshment by resting. But resting on Sunday is not the same thing as the OT observance of the Sabbath day. Some Christians have chosen to treat Sunday as if it were a Sabbath, as if it were special, and that’s entirely permissible. Don’t let anyone tell you it is wrong. But neither should you tell anyone that it is wrong if they treat Sunday like every other day of the week.

“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” (Rom. 14:5).

If you want to observe Sunday as a day of rest to the exclusion of all other worldly pursuits or activities, that’s fine. But you have no biblical right to expect others to do the same and therefore no biblical right to pass judgment on them if they don’t.

My point is simply that for the Christian, for the person who is trusting in the work of Jesus Christ rather than in his own efforts, for those resting by faith in Jesus, *every day is the Sabbath!* Every day is a celebration of the fact that we don’t have to do any spiritual or physical works to gain acceptance with God. We are accepted by him through faith in the works of Jesus Christ. If you are a child of God, born again, trusting and believing in Jesus for your acceptance with God rather than in your own works and efforts, you are experiencing the true meaning of Sabbath twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. I observe the Sabbath every moment of every day to the degree that I rest in the work of Christ for me. Thus, for the Christian, Jesus is our Sabbath rest!