

“Living the Life!  
Respecting One Another’s Convictions”  
Romans 14:1-12  
9/17/2022

We are looking at the idea of Living the Life

So far, we have looked at Romans 12 and Romans 13  
As Paul writes to the new Christians who live in Rome

The Apostle Paul wrote a bunch of letters to these new churches  
Almost all of these letters were written to churches  
Who Paul had been a part of or had a hand in starting

But Paul had never been to Rome at the time he wrote  
his letter to the Romans  
He was planning on traveling there,  
On his journey which would eventually be to Spain  
The end of the world in that day and understanding

In this most significant of his letters,  
Paul writes not just about Jesus  
But more importantly, about who Jesus Christ is  
And **what** Christ Jesus means to the world  
and what Jesus **accomplished** for us who are Christians  
Much, perhaps most, of our Christian theology,  
Or our understanding of our faith  
Comes from Paul’s letter to the Romans  
Paul wrote Romans, and about half of his letters,  
Before Matthew, Mark and Luke were written  
And long before the Gospel of John was written  
Paul’s letters are formative stuff for the church

In Romans, after Paul explains what our faith is,  
He then gets to some practical advice  
How we are to live  
How we are to behave toward one another  
And love one another  
And today, how we get along with each other  
When we don’t agree about everything.

In Paul’s time,

There were a bunch of controversies  
Do men have to be circumcised to be followers of Jesus  
Are non-Jewish people among those who Jesus saves  
What Jewish dietary laws do we have to follow  
And what about eating meat that was sacrificed to pagan idols

*<sup>1</sup> Welcome the person who is weak in faith—but not in order to argue about differences of opinion. <sup>2</sup> One person believes in eating everything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. <sup>3</sup> Those who eat must not look down on the ones who don't, and the ones who don't eat must not judge the ones who do, because God has accepted them.*

*<sup>5</sup> One person considers some days to be more sacred than others, while another person considers all days to be the same. Each person must have their own convictions.*

*<sup>10</sup> But why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you look down on your brother or sister? We all will stand in front of the judgment seat of God.*

*– Romans 14:1-3, 5, 10*

We are called, though our faith in Jesus,  
To have convictions and opinions in regard to our faith  
And about how we live our life each day

Will we always agree?

Fast forward from the first century of the Church  
With the controversies I mentioned before,  
A couple thousand years

In recent centuries, we have had people **who had strong faith**  
And who **deeply loved** Jesus  
On opposite sides of theological debates on  
War and peace  
Anyone here remember the division about the Viet Nam War?  
It also was around in World War I and World War II

We argued about slavery and abolition  
About whether women could vote  
or participate in the leadership of the church  
We've had people with deep faith on both sides of the  
Pro-life and pro-choice debate  
Grape juice versus wine  
I could go on,  
But we've had plenty of, shall I say, discussion over issues

Right now, United Methodists are making headlines  
across the country and around the world  
about who Jesus loves and how welcoming we should be

Will we always agree with each other?  
But here's the thing...  
When we disagree,  
we are also called to respect one another's convictions  
even if they are different from ours.

Jesus said,  
<sup>34</sup> "I give you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have  
loved you, so you also must love each other. <sup>35</sup> This is how everyone  
will know that you are my disciples, when you love each other."  
— John 13: 34-35

Or to borrow a phrase from John Wesley  
(who borrowed it from Peter Meiderlin)  
"In essentials unity,  
in non-essentials liberty,  
in all things charity." (Love)

What are the essentials?  
For me it is  
Loving God  
Loving our neighbor and one another  
Knowing that it is Jesus who saves us  
And **trusting fully** in Jesus' saving grace  
And **accepting** the abundant and eternal life he offers to us

What is on your list of essential beliefs?  
I'm guessing that it is somewhat similar

I think that ultimately our center point as Christians  
Is all about Jesus

*"In essentials unity,  
in non-essentials liberty,  
in all things charity."* (Love)

This is how we are to treat one another  
When we disagree about important things

Can we respect and love one another  
When we deeply disagree about important things?

(Dr Stein's General Conference story – mid 1940s?)

How should we treat one another  
when we disagree about important things?  
We are to respect one another's convictions  
even if they are different from ours

*"In essentials unity,  
in non-essentials liberty,  
in all things charity."* (Love)

We are to assume that our brother or sister in Christ  
Loves Jesus as much as we  
and wants to serve our Lord as much as we do

<sup>6</sup>...*Each person must have their own convictions.*

<sup>10</sup> *But why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you look  
down on your brother or sister? We all will stand in front of the  
judgment seat of God.*

Paul continues a couple of verses later,

*<sup>19</sup> So let's strive for the things that bring peace and the things that build each other up.*

So as we consider what's essential to our faith,

Let's focus on Jesus

On Jesus' love and sacrifice for us

And on our love for him...

Look round this room – or around your living room –

Can we earnestly sing this next song together – in one accord?

(Hymn

“O How I Love Jesus”

# 170)