

INTRODUCTION

Open your Bibles, please, to Romans 14. Today I want to talk about, “Hey! A Christian Can’t Do THAT!” I heard about a guy who crossed the street in front of his house to go to the mailbox and get the mail. And after he got the mail he was walking back across the street, a car was bearing down on him, so he sort of darted back toward the mailbox. The car darted in that direction. So he changed direction and darted back in the other direction. The car swerved and headed toward him again. He headed back toward the mailbox and sure enough, the car was zeroing in on him there. Finally he just stopped in the middle of the road. The car screeched on its brakes and stopped. The guy walked around there and the driver’s window came down, and there was a squirrel behind the driver’s wheel. And he said, “I just wanted you to know what it feels like.”

Whether you dart to the left or the right today, I think the Holy Spirit of God is going to run you down. This is one of those sermons that is going to make some of you mad and some of you it is going to set free. You know, Jesus said, “The truth will set you free, but it will also make you mad.” This can be a very liberating sermon or this can be one that just kind of makes you mad enough to want to slash my tires or something, but we’re going to go in that direction.

Okay, by way of introduction, I have here a gold earring loop. How do you like it? How do you think I would look with a pierced ear? I can’t ever remember which ear you’re supposed to do it in, guys. I get so confused. I’ve kind of been thinking about getting one of my ears pierced. How many of you in this room, and I know most of us are Christians, how many of you in this room think it’s wrong for a guy to have a pierced ear? Let me see your hand. Yeah, okay, good for you. How many of you in this room that are Christians, and you say, you know, hey, no big deal if a guy wants to pierce his ear, let me see your hand. Wow. You know what? Both groups that raised their hands are Christians. Hmm.

Well, how about this. I’ve got some cigarettes. These aren’t mine. I borrowed these from Mike Parks. How many of you think it’s wrong for a Christian to smoke a cigarette? Let me see your hand. All right, good for you. How many of you say, you know, it’s no big deal if a Christian smokes a cigarette, let me see your hand. A bunch of you. I’m not going to smoke, because you know what? I think if I lit up a cigarette, it would probably offend some of you. Amen? I’m not going to get my ear pierced either, relax, because you know what? It probably would offend some of you, and to me it’s not that important.

Here’s a cap. How many of you think it’s wrong for a man to wear a cap inside of a church? Let me see your hand. There are a lot of people that believe it’s wrong. How many of you say, well, it’s no big deal if a guy wears a cap inside a church? Quite a few, especially up there in the balcony. Take those caps off up there!

All right, what does the Bible say? Let’s look up “earring.” Doesn’t say much about it. Let’s look up “cigarettes.” Look in your Bible concordance under ‘C’ and see if you can find the word cigarette. It’s not there. What about wearing a hat in church? You say, doesn’t it say something in I Corinthians 11 about a man not covering his head when he prays or prophesies? It does, but it’s not talking about this head, it’s talking about Christ the Head. I’m not going to wear this cap

either, you know why? Because it would offend some of you. And to me, it is not that big a deal. But you know what? I'm going to respect the right of those of you who think that smoking is wrong. I'm also going to respect the rights of some of you who think a Christian can smoke and they won't go to hell. They just smell like they have been there. I'm going to respect the rights of some of you who say, "Well, you know a guy shouldn't wear an earring, that's wrong." I'm going to respect the rights of some of you guys who say, "Yeah, no big deal." That's what I'll do, because the Bible doesn't speak to those things.

Now, if I don't have your attention yet, that's what we're talking about this morning, those issues about which the Bible does not *directly* address and how we ought to deal with them. Let's begin reading Romans 14. Paul has just said, "Wake up, open your eyes," and he says in chapter 14 of Romans, verse 1, "accept." That's the most important word in this passage. Underline it and highlight it. "Accept him whose faith is weak without passing judgment on" – and here's the key – "disputable matters." We just looked at a few disputable matters. We have a dispute here, a loving disagreement about some matters of conduct.

One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man's faith whose faith is weak eats only vegetables. The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him. "Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls, and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand." He gives another example here. "One man considers one day" – means one day of the week – "more sacred than another. Another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. He who regards one day as special does so to the Lord. And he who eats meat, he eats it to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God. But on the other hand, he who abstains" – meaning from eating meat – "does so to the Lord and he gives thanks to God."

Then here's the reason we ought to accept one another. "For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living. You, then, why do you judge your brother or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat." The word judgment seat is *bema*, the judgment seat of Christ, not the great White Throne Judgment. It is written in Isaiah 49, "As surely as I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow before me and every tongue will confess to God. So then each of us will give an account of himself to God."

As we talk about this passage of scripture, I promise for some of you, it's going to be eye opening and it is going to be liberating. I mean, at the end of this sermon, you're going to go, "Wow! That's great!" You know why I know that? That's what folks have been saying to me as they have been leaving after the first two messages. "I never knew that, that's great!" Others are going to be saying, "I don't know about that." That's going to be their reaction. Let's see which one you are.

I. THREE KINDS OF CONDUCT

First of all, let's notice three kinds of conduct, three kinds of behavior, three classifications. Some conduct is:

- 1. Right**
- 2. Wrong**

There is right and wrong. Don't miss what the Bible is saying here. There are some moral absolutes. According to the Bible, there are some things that are right and some things that are wrong.

By the way, this actually happened in a sociology class over here at SMU. The professor was telling his class, there are no moral absolutes. Everything is relative. Situation ethics. No moral absolutes. No right and no wrong. One of the students who was from Tyler, who is a committee Christian, said, "Sir, are you absolutely certain?" The professor said, "Yes, I'm absolutely certain." Think about the faulty logic there. He says there are no moral absolutes and he's absolutely certain about it, which is a moral absolute.

There are some people who say, "You can't know right from wrong. Everything is gray." No, there is wrong and there is right, according to the Bible. Remember what Paul said, "Wake up, put on the armor of light. There's some behavior you ought not involve yourself in, orgies, drunkenness, selfishness, dissension, sexual immorality." Those things he said. There are certain things that are wrong. In the Bible, it's always wrong to tell a lie. According to the Bible, it's always wrong to commit adultery. According to the Bible, homosexual behavior is always wrong. According to the Bible, it's always wrong to murder, always wrong to steal. You can't ever get around it. In the Bible, there are some things that are right. It is always right to be faithful to your mate. It is always right to be honest. It is always right to be loving. It is always right to honor and respect your parents. Right and wrong.

But there are things we face in life that do not fall neatly into those first two categories. There are some things that we're faced with, some areas of conduct that the Bible really doesn't address. So there is a third kind of behavior that we've all got to look at today. That's what Paul is addressing. There is conduct that is

3. A matter of personal conviction

Some Christians say, "Hey, this is wrong, I can't do it." But some Christians say, "There's nothing wrong with this, I can do it." Some Christians say, "I can't put an earring in my ear," and some Christian guys say, "Hey, no big deal, I can put an earring in my ear." There is disagreement, matters of personal conviction.

Paul gives a couple of examples here. Number one, he talks about what you ingest, what you consume:

a. The diet and drink issue

In the Church of Rome, some people came out of idol worship, paganism. They’d take the finest of all the cattle sacrificed it to one of these pagan idols and they would only take a little bit of that meat and burn it on the altar, then take all the rest of that good meat and they would sell it to the public to buy. So people bought this meat and they ate it up. But there were some Christians said, “Oh no, a Christian cannot eat that meat.” There were even some Jewish Christians who had come out of Judaism that said, “And you don’t know how that meat was killed, and in order for that meat to be kosher, it has to be killed a certain way.” So the best thing to do, just don’t eat any meat. But there were some other Christians in the church said, “Hey, no big deal, those idols aren’t real, it’s good beef, it’s cheap and it’s good. Hey, no bit deal. What’s the issue?” They disagreed over it. Listen to me. I like things neat and well defined. I would have preferred, and many of you would have preferred, if Paul had just said, “I’m going to address this issue. Don’t eat meat, period.” That would have settled it. He said, “No, there’s some Christians that will and some that won’t. It’s a matter of personal conviction.” In fact, the next issue, not only the diet and drink issue, was a certain day of the week or

b. The day issue

In verse five, one man considers one day more sacred than another. Some of these Christians had come out of Judaism and they were still keeping Saturday, observing the Sabbath. Worshipping on Sunday. And when some of these new Gentile Christians came into the church, they said, “Hey listen, guys. You want to be a Christian? You’ve got to observe all the Sabbath regulations. You can’t walk more than half a mile; you can’t work, you can’t cook food, can’t do all these things.” Some of these Christians were coming and saying, “No. No day is more important than any other day.” Now, those were some issues that the Bible didn’t address directly, and Paul said, “It’s a matter of personal conviction.”

That leads me to the third thing here, I want us to bring it up to date, not talk about just about the diet, drink and day issue back then.

c. What are some modern taboos?

Taboo or not taboo, that is the question. Is it right or is it wrong? Some Christians say it’s right, some Christians say it’s wrong, and they disagree. They lovingly disagree about it. Let me give you a list of things that I have heard through the years people tell me, well-meaning Christians, a list of things through the years that aren’t addressed in the Bible that Christians have told me, “It is wrong to do this. It’s sin to do this.”

- 1) Smoking. Everybody, if you’re a Christian, you don’t smoke.
- 2) Dancing. Christians just don’t dance. Somebody said, “Can Baptists dance?” Well, from my observation, some can and some can’t.
- 3) Card playing. Whoa! Card playing! Christians don’t play cards. Y’all know how the domino game got started? A bunch of Baptists thought it was a sin to play cards, so they played the game of dominoes. Dominoes are okay, but not card playing.

4) Chewing tobacco, dipping snuff. Oh, that's wrong, that's a sin.
Drinking a glass of wine.

5) Mixed bathing. Some of you don't even know what that is. You know what mixed bathing is? We're not talking about a bath; we're talking about boys and girls, males and females swimming together in the same swimming pool. That's a sin in some churches. And in fact, I've been told that Green Acres Baptist Church, not too many years ago, that was practiced on church camps. Mixed bathing.

6) I've had people tell me that reading out of any version of the Bible except the King James Version is a sin against God. I'm serious; they were sincere.

7) Shopping on Sunday is a sin.

8) Watching or participating in sports on Sunday is a sin.

9) Working on Sunday.

10) Listening to secular music is a sin.

11) Reading secular magazines is a sin.

12) For a woman to wear makeup is a sin. I say it's a sin for some of them who don't wear makeup.

13) For a woman to cut her hair short, that's a sin.

14) For a woman to wear pants.

That's just a list of things I've heard through the years, some of these taboos that people say are wrong.

You've probably got a list that's different than my list and, it's a long list of things. You know, just take one example. I've always heard that Christians don't smoke. Well, it's kind of interesting, you think about the Amish people over there, who for religious reasons don't use automobiles or electricity or anything. They're very strict in their religious adherence. But they grow and sell tobacco, and most of them smoke.

Most Baptists, in Texas especially, or America are teetotalers. But you go over to Germany and not only will the German Baptists drink beer; they'll serve beer at their church suppers. And they claim to be Christians.

I heard about a preacher who one time preached a whole sermon on the sin of smoking cigarettes. There was a little lady on the third pew and every time he said something about smoking being a sin, she said, "Amen brother! Amen!" And when the service was over, she stood up, opened her purse, took out her tin of snuff and put a little pinch of that snuff between her cheek and gum. Now snuff is just ground-up tobacco. She goes to the back door where the preacher is, and she says, "Preacher, that was a great sermon. Because I think it's a sin to smoke." And he said, "Madame, you have the audacity to stand there and tell me smoking is a sin while you dip snuff? How dare you?" She said, "That's right, preacher, it's a sin to burn anything that tastes this good." You say, pastor, are you saying that smoking and dipping snuff is okay? No, I'm not saying that. I'm just saying that's one of the things the Bible doesn't address.

Charles Spurgeon was that great English Baptist preacher of the last century. He smoked cigars, and everybody in his church knew he smoked cigars. In fact, I have been to eastern Kentucky, where they grow tobacco. In Kentucky Baptist churches, there are ashtrays in the fellowship hall, because the pastor, the deacons, everybody smokes, even in the church building. They call themselves Christians.

One evening at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, Charles Spurgeon had invited a great American preacher to come in. And that preacher spent the whole sermon preaching against the sin of smoking, not knowing that Charles Spurgeon smoked cigars. He preached away, and the people in that congregation just got quieter and quieter and quieter. After it was over, Charles Spurgeon stood up and in a way that only he could do it, in a very loving and kind way, he said, "Let's open our Bibles to Romans 14." He used the passage we're talking about today to talk about it. He said, "For some Christians, their conscience won't let them do it." He made the famous statement for which he's been quoted many times. He said, "Not only do I smoke cigars, I smoke cigars to the glory of God." Ooo. I don't believe I could do that, but Charles Spurgeon said he could.

All of these are different kinds of taboos. You say, pastor, are there any guidelines whatsoever? Yes, there are some guidelines about how you ought to judge conduct and behavior. This is not on your outline. You might want to jot it down. The first question you ask yourself is, "Is this prohibited in the Bible?" If it does, that settles it. Question number two, is this something I can ask God to bless? Can I ask God to bless this behavior? If you look down there in verse 6, it says, "Even the one who eats meat can say, thank you, Lord, that I don't eat meat, but the one who does eat meat, he says thank you, Lord, that I'm eating this meat." Can you ask God to bless it? The third guideline you use to decide whether behavior is right or not is, would you like to be found doing this when Jesus comes back? Would you like to be found doing this when Jesus comes back? You kind of use those to help you form a basis. The main thing you need to see, according to the Bible friend, there are some things that are right, there are some things that are wrong and there are some areas of conduct that are a matter of personal conviction.

II. TWO KINDS OF BELIEVERS

That's according to the word of God. There are two kinds of believers mentioned in this passage. There are three kinds of conduct and two kinds of believers. One kind is a

1. Weak Christian (legalism)

Three times in this passage, he speaks about a weak Christian. Look in verse 1. Accept him whose faith is weak. Verse 2, another man whose faith is weak eats only vegetables. A weak Christian is someone who’s still living under legalism. Let me give you a couple of characteristics of a weak Christian who is a legalist.

a. Their list is longer than God’s

God has a list of what’s right and what’s wrong, but a legalist is somebody who has added to that list and they have added the traditions of man and man’s commands to the word of God. By the way, that’s what the Jews did in the Old Testament. They had the word of God, and then they built a fence around it and said, “You can’t cross our fence.” Then they built another fence around that, and said, “You can’t even cross these two fences.” And then make sure if you don’t cross these two, you won’t cross God’s. They added on a bunch of traditions of men. That’s why Jesus said in Mark 7, “You have made the word of God of no effect because of your traditions.” You’ve got to ask yourself, “Do I believe what I believe because of a tradition or because it’s in the word of God?”

Here’s a second characteristic of a weak Christian who lives under legalism.

b. They often condemn those who don’t follow their list

You say, I’ve got my list, and if you don’t follow my list, you’re not right with God. Let me read you what Ray Stedman says about a legalist. He says, “A legalist sees Christianity as a thing of rules and regulations. In his heart, he believes he can gain God’s favor by doing certain things and abstaining from doing other things. Basically, he is still trying to earn a right relationship with God and has not yet accepted the way of grace.” I like this next line. “A legalist lives in mortal terror that some Christian somewhere is enjoying himself.”

A legalist almost thinks like, “You know, if you’re not really miserable, you’re not really a good Christian.” Many legalists have perfected what I call sort of a “Baptist holy look,” a cross between acid indigestion and a migraine headache. I’ve got my list. You better follow my list.

It even has to do with days of the week. Some people say Sunday is the Christian Sabbath. That is official Roman Catholic dogma. The Roman Catholic dogma in print says “Sunday has become the Christian Sabbath,” but it is not in the Bible. You won’t find it anywhere. So there are some of you in this room that you don’t do anything on Sunday. You may not even read the funny papers on Sunday. You don’t go out and have recreation. You think Sunday is only for a day of rest and day of worship. And good for you. I’m glad you feel that way. But there are other Christians who say, I’m going to worship God on Sunday, I’m going to serve the Lord on Sunday, but on Sunday afternoon, I may do something like that. And you do it with a clear conscience.

The same is true with holidays. There are some Christians I know who don’t celebrate Christmas for religious reasons. They know, correctly, that December 25th is based upon a pagan Roman

festival called Sol Invictus, the victory of the sun, so they say “Christmas trees, decorations, that’s all a pagan tradition, so we’re not going to do it.” If you want to make that choice, good for you, I’m proud you take your faith that seriously. But don’t make somebody else follow your list on that, and don’t try to make somebody else feel guilty because they don’t do that. In fact friend, we have almost reversed the roles. We have come to a point where we think strong Christians are those with the longest lists. Paul says, “No, the weak Christians are the ones who have a list that’s longer than God’s.”

Halloween. I remember a few years ago, not long after I had come to Green Acres Baptist Church, we decided we were going to have a Fall Festival over here in the Family Life Center to give kids an alternative to trick-or-treating. I had a lady come to me so mad, seething with anger, who said, “Christians ought not to have anything to do with Halloween. That is of the devil. It is wrong for our church to even offer something on Halloween night.” When she found out that my little girls had dressed up and gone trick-or-treating most of their life, she knew I was lost and of the devil and a terrible guy. She was just excoriating me. You’ve got to be there, just the two of us. I’m being kind and trying to listen and being sensitive to her, but you’ve got to know me. I’m always looking for something positive in every negative experience. What good can I get out of this? She was just lambasting me. I found myself thinking, Lord, thank you that I’m not married to this woman, and that just allowed me to smile and listen to her. And we prayed together, and she left the church. And that’s fine, you know. I hope they’re happy where they are. By the way, Halloween night, we’re going to have our Family Fall Festival right over here in the Family Life Center. You may be against anything like that. That’s all right. I will fight for your right to believe that. Just don’t impose your list on everybody else. All right?

1. Strong Christian (liberty)

There’s another kind of Christian, one is weak, a legalist. Number two, there’s Christians who the Bible calls strong, and they live under liberty. Was the apostle Paul weak or strong? Well, turn to chapter 15:1. “We who are strong bear with the weak.” So Paul was in the strong camp. He said, “It’s okay to eat meat.” He said, “There’s not one day that’s more sacred than another day, but if you want to believe that, that’s okay.” Here’s how you describe a strong Christian.

a. They are set free from man’s lists

Now, they follow God’s list, but not man’s list.

Dr. Jess Moody is a great pastor, one of my heroes and models in the ministry. He was pastor of First Baptist Church, West Palm Beach, Florida, for many years and then he pastored at Van Nuys, California. Now he teaches over at Southwestern Seminary. I heard Jess Moody say, one time he was always such a traditional Christian. He said he can remember saying to the congregations he pastored, “Nobody will clap your hands in a church service.” Uh no, “Heaven forbid, nobody will ever lift your hands in a Baptist worship service.” He said he believed that way until somebody came up to him and lovingly said, “Pastor, Psalms 47:1 says, ‘Clap your hands, all you people, shout unto God with a voice of triumph.’” Jess Moody looked at him and said, “Oh.” Psalm 63 and a lot of other places said, “I will lift up my hands unto the Lord.” Jess Moody looked at it and said, “Oh.” He said he marked those off his list.

You see? We have all of these lists. “Can’t have drums in the church.” That’s on some of your lists. You know what? I respect your belief in that area, but the Bible says, Psalms 150, Mike just read it, “Praise the Lord with clashing cymbals and the sound of drums.” You know, you’ve got to decide, are these things of the Bible or are they the traditions of men?

I can tell some of you are going to be mad about this. I’m afraid I’m going to get my tires slashed after this service or something. Here’s another characteristic of a strong Christian. They are

b. Careful NEVER to offend a weaker Christian

The whole point by the way, next week we’re going to continue on this about love being more important than liberty, but look down in verses 20-21 of chapter 14. Just so you’ll understand what Paul is saying here. Halfway through verse 20, he says, “All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble.” So he says, “Here’s what I’ll do.” He said, “It’s better not to eat meat or to drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall.”

You know, I don’t really see any problem about walking down the hall of a church with a cap on, but I don’t do it because it would probably offend somebody. I don’t see anything in the Bible that forbids a guy from wearing an earring if he wants to do that, but I’m not going to do it, because I don’t want to offend some of you. It’s the same thing with smoking cigarettes. I don’t do it because the Bible doesn’t say do it. I do it for medical reasons, you see? And I know it would offend people. That’s the point. A strong Christian is careful never to offend another believer.

III. ONE ESSENTIAL ATTITUDE

The next thing we want to see is one essential attitude. There are three kinds behavior, two kinds of believers and one essential attitude. It is the first word in chapter 14.

Accept one another!

It doesn’t just mean tolerate one another. It means, hey, embrace and accept one another, even those who disagree with you about some of these matters of personal conviction. Philip Melancthon was a great leader of the Protestant Reformation. He was famous for this observation.

- 1. In the essentials, there must be unity**
- 2. In the nonessentials, there must be liberty**
- 3. In all things, there must be charity**

When he said charity, it’s the King James word for love.

Paul is saying, “To all of you Christians who know that you are strong and you’ve been set free from man’s lists, you’re living under grace, you’ve been set free by the truth, don’t flaunt your

liberty, don’t force it on somebody else.” While they’re over there not eating meat, don’t say, “Boy, this sirloin steak is delicious. Too bad you can’t eat it.” If you do that, you’re not a strong Christian. You’re always careful never to offend them. He’s saying to strong Christians, “Settle down.” What he’s saying to weak Christians is, “Grow up.” Quit imposing your list on somebody else. It’s okay if you’ve got that list. Make sure it doesn’t compromise anything in the Bible, but don’t make somebody else follow your list. That’s what he’s saying.

You know, I’ve had trouble with that through the years myself, and I hope I’m growing in that. I know I used to hate people that smoked cigarettes. That’s true. I used to just not like them at all. I think one reason is because both my mom and dad smoked and died prematurely because they smoked. But it became a point for me where I can remember saying to them one time, “Hey, mom and dad, you cannot be a Christian and smoke. Make a choice, Jesus or cigarettes.” That was a terrible, intolerant attitude. I regret ever saying that to my parents. You know why? That’s one ever those nonessentials where there ought to be liberty. I think it’s wrong. I don’t do it. Somebody else may do it. It’s a nonessential. It shouldn’t divide our fellowship.

Several years ago a bunch of us guys were skiing at a men’s retreat out in Angel Fire, New Mexico. Lanny Bridges and I skied to the bottom of one of the runs, to a snack bar for lunch. We took off our skis and sat down at an outdoor picnic table. There was a man sitting there we didn’t know. He had on a PromiseKeepers hat. Boom! First thing I think, “This is a Believer, he’s got on a PromiseKeeper’s hat. We’re going to sit down and we’re going to talk about Jesus, about PromiseKeepers.” Next thing I noticed, he had a beer with his lunch. There was a time in my life I would have looked at his PromiseKeepers hat and his beer and I would have said, “Buddy, one of them has got to go. Either Jesus has got to go or the beer has got to go.” Either take that hat off or throw away that beer. You know what? I sat down and we started talking to that guy. He knew Jesus Christ and he loved Jesus Christ. He talked about the difference Jesus had made in his family, in his church and in his work. When I told him I was a pastor from Texas, he didn’t go, “Whoops!” You know, he could do that with a clean conscience. You know what? We accepted him as a brother, even though Lanny and I did not believe we should do what he was doing. We accepted him. You know why? Hey, folks, that’s a nonessential. It really is.

Dancing. I confess, my wife and I sometimes dance at our home all by ourselves. We like to do that. But if you believe that’s wrong, good for you. Just don’t impose your list on us. The key is to accept one another.

What are the essentials? There are some essentials we cannot compromise what’s right and what’s wrong, according to the Bible. I cannot compromise doctrinally with anybody who doesn’t believe what we consider to be the five fundamentals of evangelical Christianity:

- 1) Verbal inspiration. This Bible is inspired.
- 2) The deity of Jesus Christ – I mean, I can’t fellowship with somebody who says, “No, Jesus wasn’t God. He was just a man.”
- 3) The substitutionary atonement of Jesus, meaning he died in my place. I can’t accept somebody who says, “No, Jesus’ death was just unplanned. He was a martyr. That’s all.”

4) The fourth fundamental is a bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. He really did come out of the grave. I can't accept somebody and have unity with somebody that says, "No, there really was no resurrection; he's still dead and buried."

5) The literal return of Jesus Christ. That's the fifth fundamental. I can fellowship with *any* believer who doesn't compromise those five basic fundamentals of the faith.

They may believe differently about the Second Coming. I happen to believe Jesus is going to come back and rapture the church, there's going to be a seven-year tribulation, and then He's going to come back at the battle of Armageddon, and then he's going to set up a thousand-year reign on earth. I'm called a pre-tribulation premillennialist. But there are folks on this church that aren't that way. There are some people that are mid-tribulation rapture or those that are amillennialists. They think there won't be a millennium. And you know what? I can love you, I can fellowship with you, I can accept you because the belief about that is a nonessential, as long as we believe He is coming back, you see. In the essentials: unity. In the nonessentials: liberty. And in all things: charity.

IV. THREE IMPORTANT REASONS

There are three reasons we act this way. Three reasons we accept our brothers.

1. I have been accepted by the Lord

That's what it says in verse 3. If you'll look at it again, the last part of it says, "God has accepted him." Accepted whom? Accepted the guy who eats meat and the guy who doesn't eat meat. God has accepted the Christian who smokes, and He's accepted the Christian who doesn't.

2. I belong to the Lord

Look at verse 8. Whether we live or we die, we belong to the Lord. You don't belong to me, and I don't belong to you. We both together belong to the Lord, and He's the one that calls the shots. I have no right to tell you what you can do and can't do, outside of what the word of God says.

3. I will be judged by the Lord

Look at verse 10. It says, "We will all stand before God's judgment seat." Listen, I do not sit in judgment over you and you don't sit in judgment over me. We will all sit under the judgment of Jesus Christ at the judgment seat, the time when he passes out rewards. So the reason we act this way and the reason we accept one another is because Jesus has accepted us. We belong to him, and we're going to be judged by him.

I hope and pray that Green Acres Baptist Church will be a church that lives by grace. I promise you; my observation 30 years preaching to Baptists is that we have more legalists per pew than just about any other Christian denomination on earth. We have fought and we have fussed over things that don't matter in the kingdom of God. We have been fussing about these nonessentials while the world out there is lost without Jesus Christ, going to hell. It's like we're rearranging

and dusting our furniture while the house is on fire. We fight over these little things that don't matter. And then when we win, we think we're so good.

Will Rogers said a bulldog can whip a skunk but it's just not worth the effort. We win a lot of these battles, but while we're doing that, the world is lost and going to hell.

There's one final word Paul gives on this. I want you to turn over to the right about 40 pages in your Bible to Colossians 2:16. I hope Green Acres Baptist Church can be the kind of church where we accept people who wear a tuxes or overalls. I hope Green Acres Baptist Church can be the kind of church that will accept someone who drives a Rolls Royce or a John Deere tractor. I hope it will be the kind of church that accepts people who don't do anything on Sunday, just stay at home and take a nap, and people who may go out after church and perform recreational activity. Accept all kinds of people. You know why? Because there's room in the body of Christ for people who disagree on these issues that we call nonessentials.

Here's Paul's final word, Colossians 2:16-17, no comment, just let God speak to you.

"Therefore, do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a new moon, celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come, the reality, however, is found in Christ."

OUTLINE

I. THREE KINDS OF CONDUCT

Some conduct is:

1. Right
2. Wrong
3. A matter of personal conviction
 - a. The diet and drink issue
 - b. The day issue
 - c. What are some modern taboos?

II. TWO KINDS OF BELIEVERS

1. Weak – (legalism)
 - a. Their list is longer than God's
 - b. They often condemn those who don't follow their list
2. Strong – (liberty)
 - a. Set free from man's lists
 - b. Careful NEVER to offend a weaker Christian

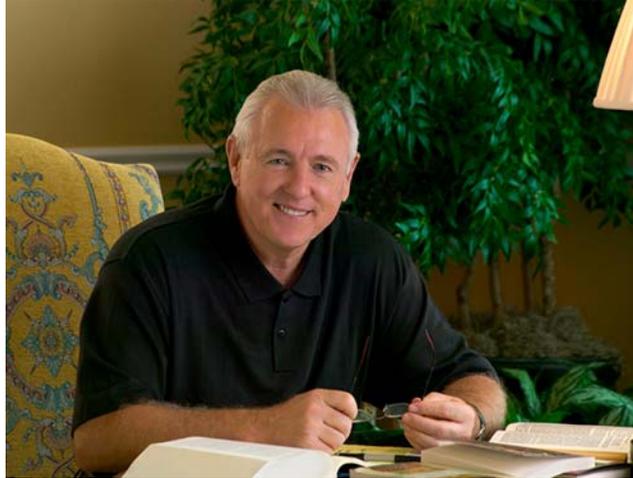
III. ONE ESSENTIAL ATTITUDE

Accept one another!

1. In the Essentials – Unity
2. In the Non-essentials – Liberty
3. In All Things – Charity

IV. THREE IMPORTANT REASONS

1. I have been accepted by the Lord
2. I belong to the Lord
3. I will be judged by the Lord



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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes