

Romans 14:5-9 You Belong to the Lord

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⁵One person values one day above another. Another person values every day the same. Let each person be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶The person who honors a certain day does this for the Lord, and the person who eats does this for the Lord, because he gives thanks to God. And the person who does not eat does this for the Lord and gives thanks to God.

⁷In fact, not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself. ⁸Indeed, if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. ⁹For this reason he died, rose, and lived, to be Lord of both the dead and the living.

You Belong to the Lord

I.

Guilt raised its ugly head. Perhaps in this case it was even justified. They had behaved in a boorish fashion. What they had done all those many years before was unthinkable. It was cruel.

Decades had passed. Several times during those decades their behavior came back to haunt them. First they had to lie to their father about what had happened. Years later they stood in shock when they came face to face with the one who had once been powerless, but who now held all the power over them. Then they were forced to tell their father the truth about what had really happened all those years before.

While it *seemed* that their brother had forgiven them, they had no illusions. What they had done to Joseph had been monstrous, but he had let them off easy. Perhaps it had only been because of his desire to see their aged father.

Now their father Jacob was dead. The monstrousness of the evil they had perpetrated on Joseph came back to haunt them. All over again they confronted the magnitude of their debt of sin.

II.

Like Joseph's brothers, sooner or later the magnitude of our sin confronts us. Perhaps at first review none of your sins trouble you too much. After all, *you* didn't sell your brother into slavery, did you?

But then you take a look at God's moral law. While you might be able to talk yourself out of guilt for many sins, sooner or later you find some you just can't keep ignoring. You haven't *always* been respectful of your parents or others in authority. You *have* said things that were untrue before; perhaps you tried to excuse them as necessary to avoid pain, but deep down you realize that's no excuse—a lie is still a lie.

It was Paul who gave the grim reminder: "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23, EHV). What's the qualifier? How *much* sin brings death? James explains: "Whoever keeps the whole law but stumbles in one point has become guilty of breaking all of it" (James 2:10, EHV).

Sin is serious business. Sin has to be dealt with. The brothers of Joseph came to realize the monstrousness of their sin. According to James and Paul, you don't have to sell your brother into slavery to be a monstrous sinner. You just have to disobey your parents. You just have to lie. You just have to have lust for money or property or improper sexual

relationships.

It doesn't take much to be a monster. It doesn't take much to pile up your debt of sin.

III.

Joseph assured his brothers that he had already forgiven them. He said: "Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? ²⁰You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring this to pass and to keep many people alive, as it is this day" (Genesis 50:19-20, EHV). The promise of the Savior rode within this little band of brothers. Joseph recognized that God had used his own extreme discomfort to bring about something significant—something that had much larger importance and impact.

Jacob, the father of Joseph and his brothers, had been the recipient of the promise that from his line the Savior would come. God used the brothers' greed and jealousy to get Joseph to Egypt to keep the whole family alive so the promise of the Savior could be kept alive.

Jesus was the ultimate result of the promise. When he told the parable of the Unmerciful Servant to Peter and his companions, he was explaining how vast God's promise is—how great is the magnitude of forgiveness we need and how vast is the forgiveness God provides for each one of us.

Jesus came to pay for the greed of Joseph's brothers. He came to pay for every disobedient thought or word or act you had to those in authority. He came to pay for murderers and rapists and drug dealers and anarchists. He came to pay so that the reservoir of God's forgiveness would be full. The wages of sin has been paid in full by Jesus.

IV.

"In fact, not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself. ⁸Indeed, if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord" (Romans 14:7-8, EHV).

It is faith in Jesus and what he has done for us that dominates reality. You belong to the Lord. So do all your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Paul begins this chapter: "Accept a person who is weak in faith, and do not pass judgment on things that are just a difference of opinion" (Romans 14:1, EHV). Joseph told his brothers that he didn't consider it his place to play God with them or over them. Paul says to be considerate of those who have differences of opinion.

There are some things God has either commanded or forbidden. There is no such thing as a "difference of opinion" in such matters. Failing to do what God has commanded is sin. Refusing to do what God has commanded is sin.

But there are plenty of things that are just a difference of opinion. Whether or not you believe your brother or sister is weak in the faith, be considerate of these differences of opinion.

"One person values one day above another. Another person values every day the same. Let each person be fully convinced in his own mind" (Romans 14:5, EHV). There was some disagreement in the early New Testament church as to which days were appropriate for worship. Some thought it was absolutely imperative—even mandated by God—to keep the Saturday schedule of the Old Testament Sabbath Day; others wanted to chose Sunday, because that was the weekly observance of the day Jesus rose from the dead. And what about all the festivals? Do you keep Jewish ones? Do you chose different days from the past Ceremonial Law calendar of the Church year? What about secular holidays? Do you adopt those and bring them in to your worship schedule in any way?

"The person who honors a certain day does this for the Lord, and the person who eats

does this for the Lord, because he gives thanks to God. And the person who does not eat does this for the Lord and gives thanks to God” (Romans 14:6, EHV). Besides the arguments over which days to worship, a few verses before our text Paul alluded to the fact that some Christians wanted to adopt certain dietary restrictions—perhaps those of the Old Testament Ceremonial Law—and others wanted to eat whatever they chose. As to both diet and worship days, Paul says each one has freedom in Christ to worship as he or she chooses.

Perhaps if he were writing in Covid times, Paul would tell us to be careful not to pass judgment on all kinds of choices and decisions about what might be matters of opinion. This is the reason the Elders of Holy Trinity have added a service at which everyone must wear a mask—some are more comfortable if everyone present does so. Other services are available where worshipers can wear their masks or not during the service. Some people will continue to be more comfortable worshipping at home. Do not pass judgment, no matter which group you find yourself in, on those who make a different choice...in matters of masks as well as in any other thing neither commanded nor forbidden by God.

Above all, remember that you—and all your brothers and sisters in Christ—belong to the Lord. Live in love toward one another as you serve the Lord with your whole life as a living sacrifice to God. Amen.